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Impact of antiretroviral treatment containing tenofovir difumarate on the telomere length of aviremic HIV-infected patients

Authors

Rocio MONTEJANO (1)* Natalia STELLA-ASCARIZ* (2), Susana MONGE (3), José I BERNARDINO (1), Ignacio PÉREZ-VALERO (1), Mª Luisa MONTES (1), Eulalia VALENCIA (1), Luz MARTÍN-CARBONERO (1), Victoria MORENO (1), Juan GONZÁLEZ-GARCÍA (1), Francisco ARNALICH (1), Jesús MINGORANCE (2), Laura PINTADO BERNICHES (4) Rosario PERONA (4), José R ARRIBAS (1)

Affiliations: (1) HIV Unit, Internal Medicine Service, Hospital Universitario La Paz-IdiPAZ, (2) Microbiology Service, Hospital Universitario La Paz-IdiPAZ. (3) Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, Centro de Investigación Biomédica en Red de Epidemiología y Salud Pública (CIBERESP) (4) Instituto de Investigaciones Biomédicas CSIC/UAM, IdiPAZ, Biomarkers and new Therapies and CIBER de enfermedades raras (CIBERER), Madrid, Spain.

*****Equal contribution to this manuscript

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Correspondence: Dr. Jose R Arribas. Consulta Medicina Interna 2 Hospital La Paz. IdiPAZ.

Paseo de la Castellana 261. 28046. Madrid. Spain

Tlf: +34-91-207-1676

Fax: +34-91-358-1407

joser.arribas@salud.madrid.org

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To evaluate the in vivo relevance of the inhibitory effect of tenofovir upon telomerase activity observed in vitro.

Design: Cross sectional study of HIV-infected patients with suppressed virological replication (HIV RNA < 50 copies/mL for more than one year)

Methods: Telomere length in whole blood was measured by quantitative real time PCR. We performed a multivariate analysis to elucidate variables associated with telomere length and also evaluated the association between telomere length and use of tenofovir difumarate (TDF) adjusted by significant confounders

Results: 200 patients included, 72% male, median age 49 (IQR 45-54.5), 103 with exposure to a TDF containing ART regimen (69.9% for more than 5 years) and 97 never exposed to a TDF containing ART regimen. In the multivariate analysis significant predictors of shorter telomere length were older age (p = 0.008), parental age at birth (p = 0.038), Caucasian race (p = 0.048) and longer time of known HIV infection (10-20 years and ≥20 years compared with <10 years, p = 0.003 and p = 0.056 respectively). There was no association between TDF exposure and telomere length after adjusting for possible confounding factors (age, parental age at birth, race and time of HIV infection). Total time receiving ART and duration of treatment with nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors were associated with shorter telomere length but these associations were explained by time of known HIV infection

Conclusions: Our data do not suggest that telomerase activity inhibition caused by TDF in vitro, leads to telomere shortening in peripheral blood of HIV infected patients.

INTRODUCTION

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infected patients have an increased risk for several “non-AIDS” complications such as cardiovascular disease, cerebrovascular events, malignancy, liver disease, kidney disease, bone disease, and neurocognitive decline that are classically associated with the normal aging process [1].

There is a continuous debate about if the higher risk of these complications in HIV-infected patients is the expression of an “accelerated” aging process - complications occurring prematurely -, or an “accentuated” aging process - higher prevalence of complications at every age strata. The Danish HIV cohort study has not found evidence to suggest accelerated aging in the HIV-infected population [2]. In contrast, two recent studies using epigenetic biomarkers of aging have found that HIV infected patients have an age advancement of approximately five years compared to HIV uninfected controls [3,4].

Proposed mechanisms for the abnormal aging of HIV infected patients are the proinflammatory state and immune activation associated to even well controlled HIV infection [5], traditional risk factors (such as smoking) that are more prevalent among HIV-infected people, or other still unknown causes.

Another potential cause of accelerated or accentuated aging in HIV infected patients could be telomere attrition. There is a close association between shortened telomere length in peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) and diseases of aging, including cardiovascular diseases, dementia and cancer [6].

Interestingly, multiple studies have reported shorter telomeres in HIV infected patients compared to HIV negative controls [7-12]. In HIV- infected patients telomere attrition could be caused by inhibition of human telomerase by antiretroviral drugs, more specifically nucleos(t)ide reverse transcriptase inhibitors [N(t)RTIs] [13-15].

Two recent studies have reported that tenofovir (TFV) at therapeutic concentrations is a potent inhibitor of telomerase activity [16,17], causing telomere shortening in vitro. Of the currently recommended N(t)RTIs, TFV is a more potent inhibitor of telomerase than abacavir, lamivudine or emtricitabine. In contrast, certain protease inhibitors (PI) such as saquinavir can upregulate telomerase activity in vitro [18]. Although the inhibition of telomerase caused by N(t)RTIs has been repeatedly demonstrated in vitro there are very limited data about the in vivo impact of different ART regimens on telomere shortening. Indeed, to the best of our knowledge, there is no study that has explored the impact of TFV containing regimens on telomere length of HIV infected patients receiving antiretroviral treatment (ART). This is a relevant issue because TFV administered as tenofovir difumarate (TDF) or tenofovir alafenamide is recommended as a preferred treatment option for initial treatment of HIV infection in all expert guidelines.

To try to determine the impact of TFV on telomere length of HIV infected patients receiving ART we have compared telomere length in a cohort of virologically suppressed, HIV-infected patients who were receiving antiretroviral

regimens including and not including TDF. Our research hypothesis was that exposure to TDF would be associated with shorter telomere lengths.

PATIENTS, MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study design and population

A total of 103 HIV-infected patients exposed to treatment with TDF ("TDF exposed") and 97 HIV-infected patients who had never received TDF ("Non-TDF exposed"), aged > 18 years old, were included in the study. All patients were recruited from Hospital Universitario La Paz (Madrid, Spain) between March 2014 and March 2015. Main inclusion criteria included the following: HIV antibody positive, stable ART (defined as ART without changes in regimen for at least 12 months) and plasma HIV RNA of less than 50 RNA copies/mL for at least one year prior to recruitment. We offered participation in the study to all the patients who meet inclusion criteria in our database.

Exclusion criteria were detectable viral load in the last 3 months prior to the inclusion (a unique viral load above 50 but below <200 RNA copies/ml was allowed during the three months prior to recruitment), current or previous treatment wit chemotherapy or biologic treatments, acute infection with systemic repercussion during the three weeks prior to the inclusion, former or active alcoholism, pregnancy and type 2 HIV infection. Relevant demographics, parental age at birth of the participant, clinical and behavioral data were also collected.

Variables

Patient's information regarding age, gender, race, chronic hepatitis C status, and HIV-related variables (Nadir CD4 count, transmission route and AIDS stage) was collected retrospectively from clinical records. Researchers interviewed participants to self-report about parental age at birth, financial income, educational level, and lifelong use tobacco, alcohol and non-prescription drugs. Income <12000€/year represented the median income cut-off in the Spanish region where our hospital is located [19].

For cigarette smoking, data were recorded on a yes (active or former)/no basis, number of cigarettes per day and years. Given that the effect of tobacco over the telomere length would be cumulative and potentially irreversible [20], cumulative exposure in 'pack-years' was calculated as (cigarettes/day x years smoking)÷20. Cumulative exposure to alcohol in 'gr-years' was calculated as grams of alcohol/day x years drinking. Alcoholism was defined as daily alcohol consumption >70 gr/day in males and >40 gr/day in females.

Ethics statement

The study was approved by the Ethics Committees of Hospital Universitario La Paz (Madrid, Spain). Written informed consent was obtained from all patients.

Sample preparation: DNA extraction

Genomic DNA was extracted from 1 ml of whole blood using MagPurix Blood DNA Extraction Kit 1200 according to manufacturer's instruction (Zinexts Life

Science Corp.). DNA concentration was quantified using Qubit dsDNA BR assay kit (Life Technologies).

Telomere length determination by quantitative real-time PCR

Relative telomere length was determined by monochrome quantitative multiplex PCR assay [21] with minor modifications. Briefly, PCR reactions were performed on a CFX96 Touch™ real time PCR detection system (BioRad) in a final volume of 20 µl containing 20 ng of genomic DNA, 1X PowerUp™ SYBR™ Green Master Mix (Applied Biosystem) and 900 nM final concentration of each telomere primers (telg, 5'-ACACTAAGGTTTGGGTTTGGGTTTGGGTTTGGGTTAGTGT-3' and telc, 5'-TGTTAGGTATCCCTATCCCTATCCCTATCCCTATCCCTAACA-3') and albumin primers (albu, 5'-CGGCGGCGGGCGGCGCGGGCTGGGCGGAAATGCTGCACAGAATCCTTG-3' and albd, 5'-GCCCGGCCCGCCGCGCCCGTCCCGCCGGAAAAGCATGGTCGCCTGTT-3').The thermal cycling profile was Stage 1: 2 min at 50ºC, 10 min at 95ºC; Stage 2: two cycles of 15 s at 94ºC and 1.30 min at 49ºC; and Stage 3: 32 cycles of 15 s at 94ºC, 15 s at 62ºC, 15 s at 74ºC with signal acquisition, 15 s at 84ºC, 15 s at 88ºC with signal acquisition. A standard curve was prepared with genomic DNA from an HIV negative patient by serial dilution and was included in each run in duplicate to assess amplification efficiency and linearity. All samples were run in triplicate and those with a standard deviation of the threshold cycle (Ct) greater than 0.20 were reanalyzed.

Statistical analysis

Characteristics of the sample were described using percentages for categorical variables, and mean (standard deviation) or median (interquartile range) for continuous variables with normal or non-normal distribution, respectively. Chi2, Student's t and Kruskal-Wallis were used accordingly for group comparisons.

Generalized linear models with log link function were fitted to evaluate the association of independent factors with telomere length. Variables independently associated with telomere length were evaluated using a backwards stepwise procedure until all variables in the model had $p<0.10$. Models were fitted separately for the full sample and the TDF exposed and non-exposed. Evaluated factors included: current age and sex, paternal and maternal age at birth, race, income, education, alcohol and tobacco consumption, use of injected drugs, HIV transmission route, hepatitis C virus co-infection and previous treatment with interferon, level of C-reactive protein, time with HIV infection, time on ART, time on NRTI and time on TDF (only for the group exposed to TDF), treatment with PIs, CD4 cell count nadir, and AIDS stage.

The specific effects of exposure to TDF (Yes/No), the time on NRTI (per 5 years) and, for the group exposed to TDF, the total time on TDF (<5 years; 5-10 years; and >10 years) on telomere length were evaluated using an estimative approach, adjusting for age and evaluating the confounding introduced by the rest of independent variables. Finally, as an exploratory analysis, the

association of telomere length and history of receiving PIs and time on PIs was evaluated with a similar approach.

Wald's test was used to derive p-values. Analyses were conducted using STATA (V.13.0MP, Stata Corporation, College Station, Texas, USA).

RESULTS

Characteristics of study participants

The characteristics of the participants exposed and non-exposed to TDF are listed in Table 1. Patients were on average predominantly male. There were no differences in gender, race, income or educational level. TDF treated patients had a significantly higher consumption of alcohol, (58.3% vs 33%, p=0.001), while we did not find differences in smoking habit or history of intravenous drug use.

HIV had been acquired mainly by sexual contact in both groups. More than 80% in each group had known their HIV infection for more than 10 years. Duration of known HIV infection was significantly longer in patients exposed to TDF. Patients non-exposed to TDF had been receiving ART for more than 10 years less frequently than patients exposed to TDF, but this difference did not reach statistical significance. All participants had ever received a regimen that contained an N(t)RTI, with longer duration of N(t)RTI exposure in the TDF exposed group, where more than 70% of the patients had received an N(t)RTI containing regimen for more than 10 years. Time of virological suppression was similar in both groups. Patients never exposed to TDF were more frequently

receiving triple therapy while patients exposed to TDF had more frequent use of boosted PI monotherapy. Current PI treatment and time on a PI regimen were similar in both groups. There were no differences in current CD4 count or nadir CD4 count.

Univariate analyses of the association between possible predictors and leukocyte telomere length

Younger age (<45 years vs ≥50 years) and race different that Caucasian were significantly associated with longer telomere length among all participants (Figure 1). No associations with sex, parental age at birth, educational level or income were seen overall. Cumulative exposure to tobacco was associated with shorter telomere length, whereas past history of intravenous drug abuse and cumulative alcohol consumption were not associated.

Longer time of known HIV infection was associated with shorter telomere length. Compared to patients who have known their HIV infection for less than 10 years, patients with known HIV infection for 10-20 years and ≥20 years had telomeres that were 18% and 15% shorter ($p < 0.001$ for both).

Longer time on ART and longer time receiving N(t)RTI infection were associated with shorter telomere length. Exposure to TDF was not associated with telomere length, but among the exposed, those with longer exposure had longer telomeres, an effect of borderline statistical significance ($p = 0.060$). Also, those treated with PIs had shorter telomeres, but only in the group not treated with TDF. Lower nadir CD4 cell counts, CD4 count and AIDS stage

were not associated with shorter telomere length (Table 1. Supplementary data http://links.lww.com/QAI/B6).

Multivariate analyses of the association between possible predictors and leukocyte telomere length

Table 2 shows the results from the multivariate analysis overall and separately for the group exposed and non-exposed to TDF. Significant predictors of shorter telomere length, overall and in patients non-exposed to TDF, in a multivariate linear regression model included older age (p = 0.008), paternal age at birth (p = 0.038) and Caucasian race (p = 0.048). In addition, longer time of known HIV infection was associated with shorter telomere length (10-20 years and ≥20 years compared with <10 years, p = 0.003 and p = 0.056 respectively).

In the group non-exposed to TDF, shorter telomere length was associated with Caucasian race (p=0.016) and longer time with HIV- infection (10-20 years and ≥20 years compared with <10 years, p = 0.048 and p = 0.067 respectively).

In the group exposed to TDF, longer telomere length was associated with high educational level, lower income, and total time on ART, but not with other predictors, with the association with age in the limit of statistical significance.

Impact of treatment containing TDF on telomere length

Patients exposed to TDF had telomeres that were 4% shorter than those of patients who have never received TDF, but this difference did not reach statistical significance (exp(b)= 0.96; 95%CI: 0.90-1.03, p = 0.238), nor any other independent variable was identified as a confounder of this effect.

In the group of patients exposed to TDF, in the crude analysis, compared to those with less than 5 years of exposure, those with 5-10 years had 8.7% longer telomere length (exp(b)= 1.087; 95%CI: 0.997-1.185, p = 0.060) and those with over 10 years had 6.4% longer telomere length (exp(b)= 1.064; 95%CI: 0.970-1.167, p = 0.189), although the global significance of this association was far from statistical significance (p=0.163), and no confounders were identified.

Impact of time receiving N(t)RTIs on telomere length

Telomere length decreased with time on N(t)RTI, with 4% attrition for every 5 year of treatment with N(t)RTIs (exp(b)=0.96; 95%CI: 0.93-0.99, p= 0.01). However, after adjusting for age, the relationship between shorter telomere length and longer time on NRTI decreased to 3%, and did not reach statistical significance (95% CI: 0.95-1.00, p = 0.076).

Impact of time receiving PIs on telomere length

At the crude level, in patients with previous exposure to PIs, telomere length was 7.6% shorter than in those not previously exposed (exp(b)=0.924; CI95%: 0.857-0.996; p=0.039). However, further adjustment by age and total time on ART made this association disappear (exp(b)=0.953; CI95%: 0.884-1.027;p=0.204). In the group of patients exposed to PI, no association was evident between length of exposure and telomere length, and no confounders were identified.

DISCUSSION

In our study, we have shown that ART including TDF does not appear to have an intrinsic negative impact on telomere length in peripheral blood of HIV infected patients with virological suppression. Compared with patients who have never received TDF, patients who have received TDF for a prolonged period of time - 70% for more than 5 years - did not have shorter telomeres in a multivariate analysis looking specifically at the impact of TDF upon telomere length.

Ours is the first study that has looked specifically for an in vivo effect of TDF on telomere length in HIV infected patients. For this reason, we ought to compare a group of patients who have received long-term treatment with TDF with a group of patients who have never been treated with TDF. Both groups were highly comparable in terms of factors that in prior studies have been associated with telomere length: gender distribution, age, income, and smoking status [6]. Besides, it has been shown that HIV by itself can down-regulate telomerase activity [22-24]. Importantly, all patients in both groups have prolonged virological suppression. Consequently, our results are not affected by differences between groups in virological control. Finally, both groups were comparable with regard to total time receiving ART or time receiving N(t)RTIs, two factors that theoretically could affect telomere length [16,17]. It is important to highlight that our participants treated with TDF had a longer duration of N(t)RTI exposure and despite this fact, TDF exposure was not associated with shorter telomeres.

There are very few prior studies that have explored in vivo the impact of different types of ART regimens on telomere length and none that have specifically focused on the impact of TDF. Leeansyah et al [17] in a cross sectional study with a small sample of just 53 patients found in an univariate analysis that duration of N(t)RTI-containing ART was inversely associated with telomere length and that there was no association with telomerase activity. However, in a multivariate analysis, duration of N(t)RTI-containing ART was no longer significantly related to telomere length. In a substudy of the MONET clinical trial, comparing darunavir/ritonavir monotherapy versus darunavir/ritonavir and two N(t)RTIs for maintenance of virological suppression, there was no significant association between telomere length and the duration of prior N(t)RTI treatment [25]. Besides, in MONET there were no significant differences between the two arms after three years of follow up in telomerase activity or mean change per year of telomere length. Finally, in a cohort of 229 HIV infected patients, Zanet et al found no evidence of a relationship between telomere length and antiretroviral therapy exposure, or current type of antiretroviral therapy, although in this study the prevalence of treatment with TDF was not reported [7].

In our multivariate analysis longer time of HIV infection was associated with shorter telomere length. Compared to patients with less than a decade of known HIV infection, patients with longer durations of known HIV infection had telomeres that were 9-13% shorter. Time with HIV infection had substantial colinearity with time receiving ART and time receiving NRTIs. When we

included these three variables in our model the effect of total time on ART and time receiving NRTI on telomere shortening was explained by total time with known HIV infection. Our study adds further evidence that HIV by itself or by causing persistent inflammation, immune activation or immune senescence, appear to be the predominant factors causing telomere shortening and not the use of specific antiretrovirals such as TDF [7-9,11,12,26].

The other variables associated with telomere shortening were as expected older age [20] and parental age at birth [27]. In our study Caucasian race was also associated with shorter telomere length. This finding has to be considered with caution since the impact of race on telomere length is controversial with conflicting findings depending on the study and the sample analyzed [28].

Our study is limited by its cross sectional nature that leads to unmeasured bias in the distribution of different ART regimens. However, we think that our results are inconsistent with a large effect of TDF on telomere shortening at least in peripheral blood in HIV infected patients. Despite the fact that TDF is the strongest inhibitor of telomerase activity in vitro, this effect appears to be compensated by an unknown mechanism in vivo. One possible explanation is that because HIV-Tat protein by itself can down-regulate telomerase expression and activity [24], the negative effect of TDF seen in vitro is compensated by its antiviral activity in vivo. If the inhibition of telomerase caused directly by HIV is substantially higher than the inhibition caused by TDF, then the net effect of TDF on telomere shortening could be positive and similar to other antiretrovirals. We explored also if treatment with PIs could antagonize the

negative effect of TDF since an in vitro study has shown that saquinavir can upregulate telomerase activity [18]. However, results of our analysis do not support this hypothesis. Additional mechanisms by which telomerase inhibition may lead to abnormal aging in the absence of shorter telomeres include DNA damage induced by de-protection of telomeres that may finally result in premature senescence [29].

Another limitation of our study is that we did not determine telomere length on CD4+ or CD8+ T cells, specific subsets of T cells or non-T-cell population or in high replicating tissues. It remains possible that the effect of TDF on the telomerase of these cell subsets could be different from its overall effect on whole blood. Beside, TDF levels could be different depending on the body compartment and its impact in the different tissues should be studied. In addition, time of HIV infection was no precisely measured in our study because this variable was calculated from the time of diagnosis and not from the actual time of seroconversion. Finally, since ours was a retrospective study using medical records and for certain variables, such as complete antiretroviral history, not all the data were available.

Our results do not completely rule out that there are in vivo differences among antiretrovirals in its ability to produce telomere shortening in vivo. We recognize that a better control group would be HIV infected patients never exposed to nucleosides, since other nucleosides such as abacavir have an impact on telomerase activity .[16,17] The issue of a different impact of various types of ART on telomere length would not be definitively answered if this endpoint were

not measured in a randomized clinical trial comparing different ART regimens. In particular, it would be very interesting to compare in a prospective randomized study the impact on telomere length in different cells and tissues of N(t)RTI-containing and N(t)RTI-sparing regimens in naïve patients who start ART.

In summary, we have found that despite its confirmed ability to inhibit telomerase in vitro, ART including TDF does not appear to lead to telomere shortening in the peripheral blood of HIV infected patients.

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Figure 1. Univariate analyses of the association between possible predictors and leukocyte telomere length

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

		Total n (%)	Non-TDF group n (%)	TDF group n (%)	p-value*
N		200 (100)	97 (48.5)	103 (51.5)	
Sex					
	Men	144 (72)	74 (76.3)	70 (68.0)	0.190
	Women	56 (28)	23 (23.7)	33 (32)	
Age, median [IQR]		49 [45-54.5]	49 [45-55]	49 [46-54]	0.993
	<45 years	42 (21.0)	24 (24.7)	18 (17.5)	
	45-50 years	65 (32.5)	27 (27.8)	38 (36.9)	0.279
	≥ 50 years	93 (62.5)	46 (47.4)	47 (45.6)	
Paternal age at birth, mean (SD)		32.1 (6.7)	32.2 (7.4)	32.0 (6.1)	0.898
Maternal age at birth, mean (SD)		29.5 (6.1)	29.7 (6.4)	29.3 (0.56)	0.710
Race					
	Caucasian	189 (94.5)	89 (91.8)	100 (97.1)	0.098
	Other	11 (5.5)	8 (8.2)	3 (2.9)	
Income					

	Lower (≤12000 €/year)	95 (47.5)	45 (46.4)	50 (48.5)
	Higher (>12000 €/year)	105 (52.5)	52 (53.6)	53 (41.5)
				0.761
Education				
	Primary	86 (43.0)	41 (42.3)	45 (43.7)
	Secondary	61 (30.5)	26 (26.8)	35 (34.0)
	University	53 (26.5)	30 (30.9)	23 (22.3)
				0.323
Alcohol		91 (45.5)	32 (33)	59 (58.3)
				0.001
	Years, median [IQR]	29 [20-35]	28 [19-35]	30.5 [23-36]
				0.172
	Alcohol gr/week, median [IQR]	45 [20-120]	50 [30-140]	40 [10-100]
				0.104
Smoking		106 (53)	47 (48.5)	59 (57.3)
				0.211
	Years smoking, Median [IQR]	31 [24-37]	33 [27-38]	30 [21-37]
				0.264
	Cigarettes per day, Median [IQR]	15 [10-20]	15 [8-20]	15 [10-20]
				0.818
Ever IDU		61 (30.5)	24 (24.7)	37 (35.9)
				0.086
HIV transmission route				
	Sexual	124 (62.0)	65 (67.0)	59 (57.3)
	Parenteral	70 (35.0)	28 (28.9)	42 (40.8)
	Unknown	6 (3.0)	4 (4.1)	2 (1.9)
				0.167
HCV Co-infection		40 (20.0)	14 (14.4)	26 (25.2)
				0.097

	Treatment with INF	40 (20.0)	16 (16.5)	24 (23.3)	0.229
Time with HIV infection (years) median [IQR]		18.48 [14.18-22-5]	16.9 [11.98-21.94]	19.39 [15.72-23.59]	0.007
	<10 years	23 (11.5)	15 (15.5)	8 (7.8)	
	10-20 years	99 (49.5)	51 (51.6)	48 (46.6)	0.070
	≥20 years	78 (39.0)	31 (32.0)	47 (45.6)	
Time on ART, (years) median [IQR]		14.92 [10.28-17.92]	14.34 [10.02-17.12]	15.0 [11.08-18.52]	0.09
	<10 years	40 (20.0)	22 (22.7)	18 (17.5)	
	10-20 years	138 (69.0)	68 (70.1)	70 (68.0)	0.206
	≥20 years	22 (11.0)	7 (7.2)	15 (14.6)	
Time on NRTI, (years) median [IQR]		11.95 [9.01-16.16]	11.07 [8.21-15.89]	12.68 [9.51-16.38]	0.2
	<5 years	23 (11.5)	14 (14.4)	9 (8.7)	
	5-10 years	42 (21.0)	22 (22.7)	20 (19.4)	0.495
	10-15 years	71 (35.5)	31 (32.0)	40 (38.8)	
	≥15 years	64 (32.0)	30 (30.9)	34 (33.0)	
Time on TDF, (years) median [IQR]		-	-	8.48 [3.88-10.37]	-
	<5 years	-	-	31 (30.1)	-
	5-10 years	-	-	41 (39.8)	
	≥ 10 years	-	-	31 (30.1)	

Time suppressed, (years) median [IQR]	6.79 [4.56-7.68]	6.89 [3.90-7.72]	6.70 [5.57-7.53]	0.99
Current ART regimen				
Triple therapy	128 (64.0)	69 (71.3)	59 (57.28)	
Boosted PI monotherapy	65 (32.5)	21 (21.25)	44 (42.7)	<0.001
NRTI-sparing regimen	7 (3.5)	7 (7.22)	-	
Current NRTI back-bone	128 (64)	69 (71.3)	59 (57.28)	0.041
TDF/FTC	57 (44.53)	-	57 (96.61)	
ABC/3TC	65 (50.78)	64 (92.7)	1 (1.69)	<0.001
Other combinations	6 (4.68)	5 (7.25)	1 (1.69)	
Current Boosted PI	100 (50.0)	50 (51.45)	50 (50.0)	0.671
Time on Boosted PI	7.87 [4.82-11.0]	8.92 [5.43-11.0]	6.07 [4.20-11.12]	0.18
Ever exposed to PIs as part of ART	161 (80.5)	77 (79.4)	84 (81.6)	0.698
Time on PIs, (years) median [IQR]	7.9 [4.8-11.0]	8.9 [5.4-11.0]	7.0 [4.2-11.1]	0.1802
<5 years	41 (25.5)	18 (23.4)	23 (27.4)	
5-10 years	62 (38.5)	27 (35.1))	35 (41.7)	0.232
≥10-15 years	31 (19.3)	20 (26.0)	11 (13.1)	
≥15 years	27 (16.8)	12 (15.6)	15 (17.9)	
CD4 count, (cells/μL) median [IQR]	776 [551-1037]	801 [575-1080]	733 [519-1005]	0.21

Nadir CD4 count, (cells/μL) median [IQR]	186 (92-276)	193 [93-289]	179 [87-246]	0.22
<100	52 (26)	24 (24.7)	28 (27.2)	0.278
100-200	81 (40.1)	36 (37.1)	45 (43.7)	
≥200	58 (29%)	34 (35.1)	24 (23.3)	
Unknown	9 (4.5)	3 (3.1)	6 (5.8)	
Previous AIDS stage	106 (53.0)	51 (52.6)	55 (53.4)	0.907
Comorbidities				
Chronic kidney failure	8 (4.0)	6 (6.2)	2 (1.9)	0.126
High blood pressure	37 (18.5)	20 (20.6)	17 (16.5)	0.454
Diabetes Mellitus	28 (14.0)	15 (15.5)	13 (12.6)	0.563
Treatment with statins	61 (30.5)	35 (36.1)	26 (25.2)	0.096
Blood inflammation biomarkers				
Reactive C protein (mg/L) median [IQR]	1.10 [0.37-3.79)	1.25 [0.42-4.46]	0.885 [0.29-2.99]	0.105
D-Dimer, (ng/mL) median [IQR]	224 [<170-321]	230 [<170-321]	208 [171-319]	0.87
Fibrinogen, (mg/dL) median [IQR]	330.5 [290-386.5]	332 [294-380]	329 [289-389]	0.92
Telomeres length (PCR), median, mean [IQR]	0.760, 0.782 [0.668-0.861]	0.749, 0.797 [0.685-0.861]	0.772, 0.768 [0.664-0.863]	0.962

Variable	ALL		NON TDF EXPOSED		TDF EXPOSED	
	exp(coef.) [CI (95%)]	p-value	exp(coef.) [CI (95%)]	p-value	exp(coef.) [CI (95%)]	p-value
Age (Ref. <45 years)						
≥45/50 years	0.95 [0.87-1,03]	0.216	0.91 [0.79-1.04]	0.169	0.99 [0.90-1.10]	0.908
≥50 years	0.90 [0.83-0.97]	0.008	0.88 [0.77-1.01]	0.065	0.92 [0.83-1.01]	0.074
Father's age at birth (per year)	1.005 [1.000-1.009]	0.038	1.006 (0.999-1.013]	0.080	-	
Race (Ref. Caucasic)						
Other	1.13 [1.00-1.28]	0.048	1.22 [1.04-1.43]	0.016	-	
Education (Ref. Primary)						
Secondary	-		-		1.12 [1.03-1.22]	0.006
University	-		-		1.10 [1.00-1.21]	0.044
Income (Ref. Low)						
High					0.92 [0.86-0.99]	0.031

Time with HIV infection (Ref. <10 years)						
≥ 10-20 years	0.87 [0.79-0.95]	0.003	0.86 [0.74-1.00]	0.048	-	
≥ 20 years	0.91 [0.82-1.00]	0.056	0.86 [0.74-1.01]	0.067	-	
Time on ART (Ref. <10 years)						
≥ 10-20 years	-		-		0.89 [0.82-0.98]	0.017
≥ 20 years	-		-		0.91 [0.80-1.03]	0.120

Table 2. Multivariate analyses of the association between possible predictors and leukocyte telomere length

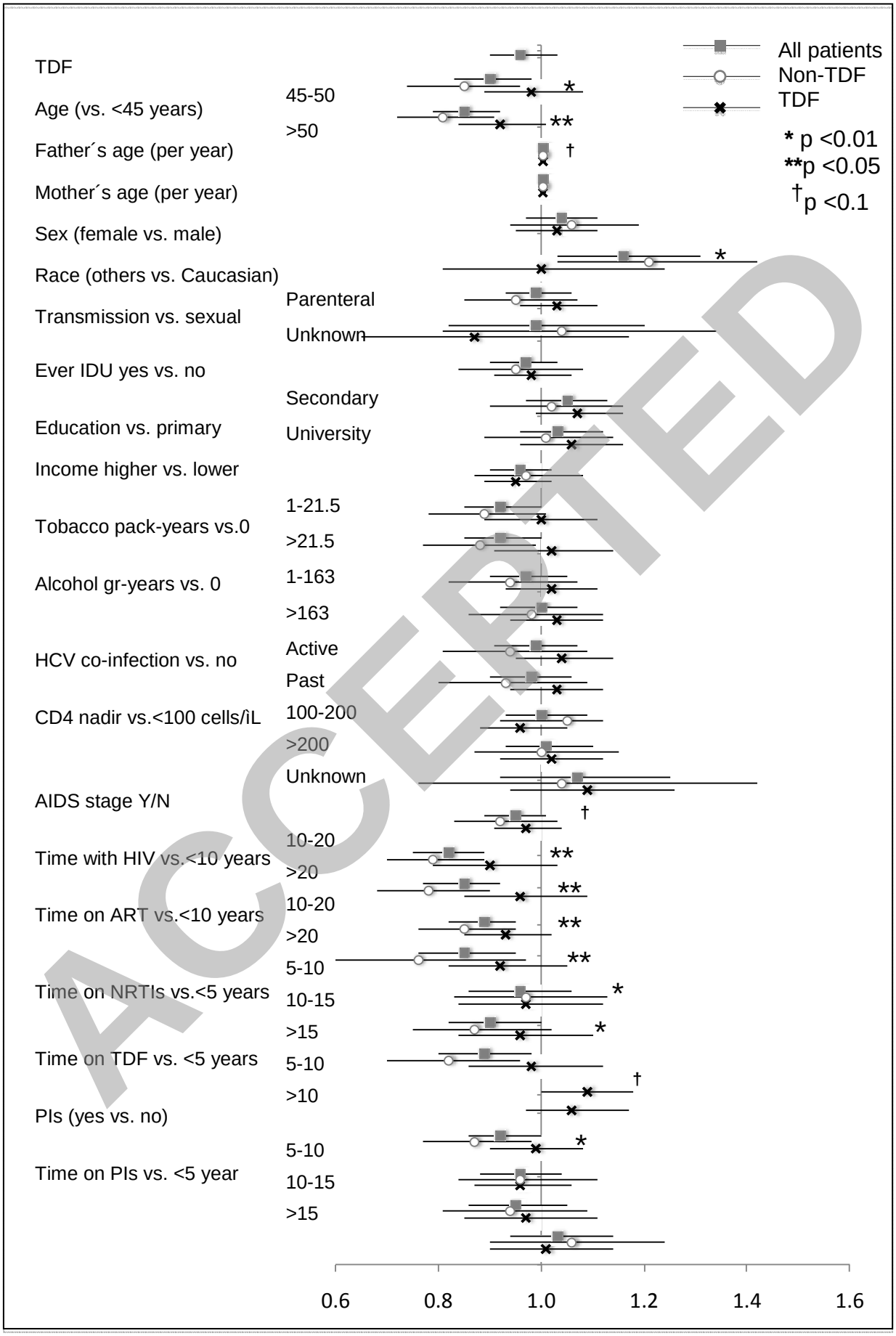

Figure 1. Univariate analyses of the association between possible predictors and leukocyte telomere length