Determination of Corrected QT Interval in Kangal Breed Dogs

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INTRODUCTION

Accuracy of electrocardiogram (ECG) has a very important role in the assessment of the heart (Matsubara et al., 2018). The QT interval in the electrocardiogram (ECG) shows the duration of ventricular depolarization and repolarization (Brüler et al., 2018). The prolongation of the QT interval indicates that the duration of ventricular repolarization is prolonged electrophysiologically, which is a risk factor for the development of various severe and life-threatening ventricular arrhythmias, including torsades de pointes (Matsunaga et al., 1997; Ackerman, 1998; Raunig et al., 2001; Chiang et al., 2006; Schmitt et al., 2007; Agudelo et al., 2011; Patel et al., 2017). Short QT syndrome is a recently described disease characterized by shortening of the QT interval and it is associated with paroxysmal atrial or ventricular fibrillation, fainting seizures and can cause sudden death in healthy people (Kijtawornrat et al., 2010; Brüler et al., 2018). QT interval depends on the heart rate, many physiological, pathalogical factors and medications, so that making interpretation of the data is very difficult (Matsunaga et al., 1997; Spence et al., 1998; Raunig et al., 2001; Batey and Doe, 2002; Chiang et al., 2006; Watanabe and Miyazaki 2006; Schmitt, 2007; Fossa, 2008; Agudelo et al., 2011; Patel et al., 2017). For this reason, it is very important to determine a true QT interval (QTc), and various studies have been carried out recently (Spence et al., 1998; Raunig et al., 2001; Batey and Doe, 2002; Chiang et al., 2006; Watanabe and Miyazaki 2006; Fossa, 2008; Patel et al., 2017).

Since it is known that the QT interval depends on the RR interval, many formulas have been developed for correcting the QT interval for the heart rate (Sarma et al., 1984; Bazett, 1920; Fridericia, 1920; Matsunaga et al., 1997; Chiang et al., 2006; Watanabe and Miyazaki 2006; Patel et al., 2017). The relationship between QT and RR intervals was first investigated by Bazett in the early 20th century with a regression formula QTb = a√RR (Bazett, 1920; Matsunaga et al., 1997; Batey and Doe, 2002). Fridericia (1920) defined the cube root correction factor (QTf = QT / RR1 / 3), which leads to more accurate results (Spence et al., 1998; Batey and Doe, 2002; Watanabe and Miyazaki 2006). While Bazett's and Fridericia's formulas are the most commonly used models for validating QT interval for clinical and non-clinical studies of heart rhythm changes, these models confirm the QT interval at 60 beats / min, so that they overestimate the QT interval at fast heart rates and underestimate it at slow heart rates (Spence et al., 1998; Raunig et al., 2001; Batey and Doe, 2002; Watanabe and Miyazaki 2006; Patel et al., 2017). Bazett's and Fridericia's formulas are created for humans, and later Van de Water have developed the formula QTcVdW = QT - 0.87 {(60 / HR) - 1} on anesthetized dogs (Batey and Doe, 2002; Van de Water et al., 1989). Various covariance formulas have also been
developed for the detection of QTc and they are generally categorized as linear regression (QT = α + β HR) or logarithmic (log (QT) = log (α) + β log (Matsunaga et al., 1997; Spence et al., 1998; Chiang et al., 2006).

Various models have been developed to explain the relationship between the heart rate and the QT interval, the specific value of the parameters can vary widely depending on the population and their condition (Spence et al., 1998; Chiang et al., 2006; Agudelo et al., 2011). Currently the best formula is not defined, and there is a need for new studies using high-quality ECG machines and various formulas on a large number of populations (Chiang et al., 2006; Watanabe and Miyazaki, 2006; Patel et al., 2017). For this reason, we have determined the corrected QT interval for the first time in Kangal dogs, considering different rate and sinus arrhythmias, age and sex-related changes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Forty-nine Kangal dogs found healthy as a result of clinical, laboratory and electrocardiographic studies were included to our study. Cases with sudden changes in the heart rhythm were excluded from the study.

ECGs were recorded in conscious dogs restrained lateral recumbency. Electrode gel was applied and the electrodes were placed through aligator clips to improve conduction. ECGs were recorded by CONTEC ECG600G model class I type CF Electrocardiography machine. When the dogs were settled short time ECGs recorded in accordance with the standard operating procedures.

Traces were recorded at a speed of 25 and 50 mm/sn with a ECG sensitivity at 1 mV. 6 leads electrocardiography were recorded which including at least 12 consecutive cardiac cycles and QRS, RR and QT intervals were measured from lead II. In this way, the effects of respiratory sinus arrhythmia were also considered. The measurements were made manually using an ECG chart and the averages were determined. QT interval was measured from the earliest onset of the Q wave to the latest end of the T wave. In cases where the end of the T wave and the beginning of the P wave are conjugate due to the rapid heart rhythm, the last part of the T wave is measured. U waves are rarely encountered in dogs. Dogs with U waves were excluded from our study.

Different formulas were used to determine corrected QT intervals (Bazet; QTcB = QT/√RR, Fridericia; QTcF = QT/√RR, Famingham; QT + 0.154(1-RR), Van der Water; QTcVdW = QT – 0.087 ((60/HR)-1), Hodges; QT+0.00175 (HR-60), Matsunaga; QTcM = log600 QT/logRR).

The QTc-RR regression line slope for each QTc formula was detected and a comparison of the QTc formulas was made. Regression line slopes were close to zero, showed the consistency of the QTc formulas calculated against changes in heart rate. Animals were divided into various groups according to age, gender and heart rhythm (<1 year,> 1 year,> 120 beats per minute heart rate, <120 beats per minute heart rate, female, male). The QTc-RR regression line slope, mean, standard deviation, and changes were calculated for each group. In a similar way, a linear regression model was used to examine the variables.

RESULTS

ECG recordings of 49 Kangal breed dogs were compared in our study. For all groups (heart rate, gender, age) 6 different QTc formulas calculated and parameters (mean, standard deviation, difference, slope and p-value) were shown in Table 1. All samples revealed a positive correlation between uncorrected QT interval and the RR interval (Fig 1). Best results of QTc-RR interval regression slope of the graph paper drawings in some groups are given in Fig. 2, 3 and 4.

As a result, it was found that Bazett’s formula showed the best consistency because the slope curve of the regression line was closest to zero (-0.00743). Regression lines for other formulas; Fridericia (0.085595), Famingham (0.049507), Van der Water (0.114146), Hodges (0.37147) and Matsunaga (0.14213) showed consistency at different levels because these formulas were different distances from zero.

To consider the data according to the heart rate (>120 beat / minute), sex (male and female), and age (<1 year); Bazett’s formula showed the best consistency that regression line was near to zero (0.062542, 0.018934, -0.02655, 0.042822, respectively). Fridericia’s formula (0.006203) in the group with heart rate <120 beats / minute and Van der Water and Fridericia’s formulas (0.022936 and 0.02865) with animals >1 years old group showed the best consistency. However, Hodges’ formula showed the least consistency because it was highly statistically significantly different from zero.

In addition, Bazetts’ formula is the best verifying method for QT interval according to the p-value (P=0.838369) as regression line. Because it was not statistically significantly different from zero. Also, similar results with regression lines were determined in other groups according to p-value (Table 1).

DISCUSSION

Several studies were made to compare different formulas of QTc (Matsunaga et al., 1997; Chiang et al., 2006; Watanabe and Miyazaki, 2006; Agudelo et al., 2011; Patel et al., 2017). QT interval is shortened in cases of increased cardiac rhythm under physiological conditions (Chiang et al., 2006; Brüler et al., 2018). Although the heart rhythm can change at high rates due to sinus arrhythmia caused by SA node in dogs, QT interval does not change due to QT “memory” (Hamlin et al., 2004; Patel et al., 2017; Matsuba et al., 2018). If the heart rhythm suddenly increases or decreases, it takes 2-3 seconds for the dogs to adapt to QT and it’ll take least 70% to steady state, which can take 2-3 minutes in humans (Matsunaga et al., 1997; Hamlin et al., 2004). Matsunaga et al. (1997) have excluded the data from sudden cardiac rhythm in order to minimize the effects of time delay because the time delay is so short in dogs. However, the effects of respiratory sinus arrhythmias are seen spontaneously in dogs, they are not removed (Matsunaga et al., 1997). Hamlin et al. (2004) reported that 12 consecutive cardiac cycles in sinus arrhythmia dogs generally equate to at least 3 respiratory cycle periods, so that measurements made from short continuous electrocardiographic monitoring with 12 consecutive
cardiac cycles accurately reflect the physiological changes that can occur with respiration. It is also reported that even measurements from 1 heart cycle, where heart rhythm is regular (no respiratory arrhythmia) and good quality recordings (no artifacts), show similar results to a large number of measurements (Hamlin et al., 2004). On the other hand, some researchers performed measurements of QT and RR intervals from normal and high frequency heart rhythms, in short-term ECG recordings in anesthetized dogs (Van de Water et al., 1989), and some researchers performed short and long-term ECG recordings in awake beagle dogs (Matsunaga et al., 1997; Batey and Doe, 2002; Schmitt et al., 2007; Kjitawornrat et al., 2010; Patel et al., 2017; Matsuba et al., 2018). Sudden rhythm changes were excluded from our study. 12 consecutive ECGs of Kangal dogs without an anesthesia were used in our study parallel to the study of Hamlin et al. (2004) to determine the influence of respiratory sinus arrhythmia. Calculations were made manually. Patel et al. (2017) reported that the digital ECG measurements were more accurate than the manual measurements, but we observed that manual measurements were more accurate in comparative measurements, especially when the heart rhythm was fast and there was slight oscillation in the isolectric line. Also, in manual measurements there are no errors that can be caused by automatic measurements when the T and U waves are combined or cannot be distinguished, or when the T and P waves are combined. Hamlin et al. (2004) also reported that no computer system today is completely reliable for the measurement of ECG parameters, and that even if measured by a computer, these measurements must be repeated by a person.

Bazett’s square root formula used in correcting the QT interval for heart rhythm is generally accepted because of its simplicity and usability (Matsunaga et al., 1997). However, investigators have reported that QT interval in Bazett’s formula is corrected to 60 beats / min heart rate, which is less reliable for awake dogs with rapid heart rhythm (Batey ve Doe, 2002; Chiang et al., 2006; Agudelo et al., 2011).

It is known that Bazett’s formula in both humans and dogs to overestimate the true value of short RR intervals and underestimate the long RR intervals (Matsunaga et al., 1997; Batey and Doe, 2002; Agudelo et al., 2011). For this reason, some researchers have supported the cube root formula of Fridericia (Matsunaga et al., 1997). However, researchers have reported that the errors in the Fridericia’s formula are similar to those in the Bazett’s formula, are inadequate for different heart rates, have some conflicting results, and are not suitable for awake dogs (Matsunaga et al., 1997; Raunig et al., 2001; Batey and Doe, 2002;
Agudelo et al., 2011; Patel et al., 2017). The formula (QTc = QT - 0.087 x [60 / HR] - 1) developed by Van de Water et al. (1989) is the correction formula used in anesthetized dogs and others are designed for humans. The researchers compared different correction formulas (Bazett, Fridericia, Framingham, Van der Water, Hodges, etc.) (Agudelo et al., 2011; Patel et al., 2017). They have found that Van de Water’s correction factor is statistically superior, more consistent, and less variable in the increased heart rhythm, which can be used to correct the QT interval time and is widely varied in heart rhythms (Hamlin et al., 2004; Agudelo et al., 2011; Patel et al., 2017). Nevertheless, Batey and Doe (2002) reported that the Van de Water formula showed similar results to the Fridericia’s formula when the RR interval was 700-1300 ms, but that these errors were smaller than the Fridericia’s formula, even at high and low heart rates besides these values. The Framingham formula can be used in normal heart rhythms but has been found unsuccessful in extreme rhythms (Batey ve Doe, 2002; Agudelo et al., 2011). Hodges QTc is reported to be a good choice due to the small correlation coefficient (Agudelo et al., 2011). Spence et al. (1998) reported that QT values were best assessed in the beagle study with log (QT) = a + β log (HR) formula, especially when populations were large, and Van de Water’s formula could be preferred for small numbers of groups. Nevertheless, it is reported that Van de Water is still superior to others that Bazett, Fridericia and Van der Water formulas still maintain their popularity (Spence et al., 1998). The discussion on this subject has still continued and has not yet reached a definite conclusion.

In our study, we found that all of the samples with high heart rhythm (average heart rate: 143.26±30.02 beats/min (minimum 90 beats/min - maximum 215 beats/min)) and in all subgroups with high heart rate (HR> 120, male, female, <1 yr) Bazett’s formula gave the best results when Fridericia’s formula was better in subgroups with low heart rhythm (HR <120 and 1 year). Hodges’ formula showed the least consistency between the other formulas according to the slope curve near to zero, and the highest statistical significance because it had higher p value cause differentiation from zero. Therefore, we found that the QTc Hodges was insufficient to correct QTc interval.

The change quantity parameter (minimum-maximum), is the narrowest QTc change interval in all samples (0.06) in the Framingham’s formula, and is the largest QTc change interval in all samples (0.16) and in all subgroups except HR <120 in the Hodges’ formula.

Some researchers prefer the linear regression model for QTc (Matsunaga et al., 1997; Spence et al., 1998; Chiang et al., 2006). When the heart rhythm is unusually high or low, the relationship between QT interval and cardiac rhythm is thought to be linear (Chiang et al., 2006). Matsunaga et al. (1997) compared the results of 14 different formulations of beagle dogs in their study. The results show that exponential formulas gave better results than linear regression formulas but are not practical because of the complexity of interpretation of parameters due to lack of linearity. Therefore, it is reported that one parameter logarithmic formula (QTc = log600 * QT / logRR msn) is more appropriate and normalized the QT
interval to 100 rpm, thus indicating that the one parametric equations are superior to multiparameter formulas (Matsunaga et al., 1997). Matsunaga et al. (1997) reported that bradycardia is a major problem due to the prolongation of QT, and they found that the logarithmic formulation is well suited to confirm the QT interval even in the large RR states of bradycardia. However, even with moderate changes in heart rhythm, it is still difficult to interpret the results, and correction for fast and slow heart rhythms is required (Batey and Doe, 2002). The relationship between the QT and RR intervals is far from linear and any mathematical correction attempt at a precise heart rhythm inevitably fails (Matsunaga et al., 1997; Batey and Doe, 2002). Logarithmic formula of Matsunaga is inadequate, especially in fast heart rhythms, in our study.

The researchers found that gender evaluations did not affect the QT interval correction studies (Patel et al., 2017). However, it has been found that the age effect is very slight on the p-value in the formula, in which case Fridericia's formula is more appropriate than the Bazett's formula (Patel et al., 2017). Similar to the study of Patel et al. (2017) gender did not affect evaluations but, HR <120 and >1 age groups with significantly lower heart rhythm were significant changes in p value.

Minor QT changes are clinically and biologically important, but detection is difficult (Patel et al., 2017). It is known that changes in heart rhythm may not only result from autonomic status, but various factors such as electrolyte impairment, drug therapy, inherited and acquired harvests may affect the QT and RR relationship (Matsunaga et al., 1997; Spence et al., 1998; Patel et al., 2017). The QT-RR relationship also varies depending on free walking status, rest state, anesthesia status, sampling or analysis methods of the data (Spence et al., 1998; Chiang et al., 2006; Watanabe and Miyazaki, 2006). That's why each validation formula has its own outstanding or underperforming performance (Watanabe and Miyazaki, 2006). Especially in dogs with rapid heart rhythms, it was known that QT-RR relation exhibits a sharp curve, and therefore new studies are being made to reveal the relationship level in different heart rhythms (Watanabe and Miyazaki, 2006; Fossa, 2008). Although many authors have reported that Bazett's and Fridericia's formulas are insufficient to correct QT interval especially in awake dogs, Patel et al. (2017) found that Bazett's formula is more appropriate than the others in HR>120 cases.

Conclusions: we found that even in dogs with high cardiac rate (HR, mean 156 ± 25 beats / min), the linear curve was obtained and similar to the Patel et al. (2017), we have observed that Bazett’s formula gave the best result. Although it has been suggested that the QT interval should be corrected to an average of 100 beats per minute for dogs with higher heart rhythm (Matsunaga et al., 1997; Chiang et al., 2006), a consensus has emerged recently that QT should not be corrected for cardiac rhythm (Rauing et al., 2001). In this study, it is concluded that Bazett’s and Fridericia’s formulas, which do not have such corrections, retain superior from Matsunaga’s logarithmic formula and other formulas.

Authors contribution: RG designed the study, made the statistical analysis; LKH wrote the study, KY collected the patients, made the ECGs, MEO has decided if the patients is suitable for study.

REFERENCES


