Mechanisms for independent and combined effects of calorie restriction and acute exercise on insulin-stimulated glucose uptake by skeletal muscle of old rats

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Although the combined effects of CR and acute exercise on glucose uptake are uncertain, earlier research has addressed potential mechanisms for enhanced insulin-mediated glucose uptake caused by either CR or acute exercise alone. The complex insulin-signaling pathway leading to insulin-stimulated glucose transport (12, 46) begins when insulin binds its receptor, inducing site-specific tyrosine phosphorylation of the receptor, which in turn leads to site-specific tyrosine phosphorylation of the insulin receptor substrate-1 (IRS-1). Tyrosine-phosphorylated IRS-1 associates with phosphatidylinositol 3-kinase (PI3K), and increased PI3K activity is required for insulin-stimulated glucose transport. Subsequently, the Ser/Thr protein kinase Akt binds to membranes that are enriched in lipids that were phosphorylated by IRS-1-P13K, leading to greater Akt phosphorylation on Thr308 and Ser473. Akt catalyzes the phosphorylation of a Rab GTPase-activating protein known as Akt substrate of 160 kDa (AS160; also called TBC1D4) on several sites, including Thr642 and Ser588, that are important for insulin-stimulated glucose transport.

Current knowledge about the independent effects of CR or acute exercise on the role of insulin signaling in the regulation of muscle glucose uptake during old age is limited, and apparently nothing has been published about the combined effects of CR and acute exercise on insulin signaling in muscles, regardless of age. Accordingly, the current study was designed to provide new insights into the mechanisms for both the independent and combined benefits of CR and one exercise session on insulin signaling and glucose uptake by insulin-stimulated muscle in old age. The specific aims were to determine in isolated epitrochlearis muscle from 30-mo-old rats the effects of chronic CR (initiated at 14 wk of age) and/or acute exercise on 1) insulin-stimulated glucose uptake, 2) activation of key insulin-signaling steps that regulate glucose uptake (including IRS-1/P13K activity, Akt Ser473 and Thr308 phosphorylation, and AS160 Ser588 and Thr642 phosphorylation), 3) Akt’s association with three protein-binding partners that can influence Akt phosphorylation [protein phosphatase 2A (PP2A), heat shock protein of 90 kDa (HSP90), and adaptor protein containing pleckstrin homology domain, phosphoty-
rosine domain, and leucine zipper motif 1 (App1)), 4) abundance of glucose transporter 4 (GLUT4) and hexokinase II, which are the proteins responsible for muscle glucose transport and phosphorylation, respectively, and 5) phosphorylation of AMP-activated protein kinase (AMPK).

**EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES**

**Materials.** Unless otherwise noted, all chemicals were purchased from Fisher Scientific (Hanover Park, IL) or Sigma-Aldrich (St. Louis, MO). Reagents and apparatus for SDS-PAGE and immunoblotting were from Bio-Rad Laboratories (Hercules, CA). Bicinchoninic acid protein assay and Pierce MemCode Reversible Protein Stain Kit were purchased from Thermo Fisher (Waltham, MA). Anti-phospho-Akt Thr173 (p-Akt Thr173; no. 9275), anti-phospho-Akt Ser473 (p-Akt Ser473; no. 9272), anti-phospho-AMPKα Ser177/187 (p-AMPKα Ser177/187; no. 6031), anti-phospho-AMPKθ Thr172 (p-AMPKθ Thr172; no. 2531), anti-phospho-insulin receptor Tyr1148 (p-IR Tyr1148; no. 3021), anti-Akt (no. 4691), anti-AMPKα (no. 5831), anti-hexokinase II (no. 2867), and anti-rabbit IgG horseradish peroxidase conjugate (no. 7074) and ATP (no. 9804) were from Cell Signaling Technology (Danvers, MA). Anti-β-actin (no. A5441) and anti-myosin heavy chain (no. 11926) were from Sigma-Aldrich (St. Louis, MO). Reagents and apparatus for SDS-PAGE and immunoblotting were from Bio-Rad Laboratories (Hercules, CA). Bicinchoninic acid protein assay and Pierce MemCode Reversible Protein Stain Kit were purchased from Thermo Fisher (Waltham, MA). Anti-phospho-Akt Thr173 (p-Akt Thr173; no. 9275), anti-phospho-Akt Ser473 (p-Akt Ser473; no. 9272), anti-phospho-AMPKα Ser177/187 (p-AMPKα Ser177/187; no. 6031), anti-phospho-AMPKθ Thr172 (p-AMPKθ Thr172; no. 2531), anti-phospho-insulin receptor Tyr1148 (p-IR Tyr1148; no. 3021), anti-Akt (no. 4691), anti-AMPKα (no. 5831), anti-hexokinase II (no. 2867), and anti-rabbit IgG horseradish peroxidase conjugate (no. 7074) and ATP (no. 9804) were from Cell Signaling Technology (Danvers, MA). Anti-β-actin (no. A5441) and anti-myosin heavy chain (no. 11926) were from Sigma-Aldrich (St. Louis, MO).

**Animals.** Male Fischer-344 × Brown Norway rats (both CR rats and their AL controls) were obtained at ~29 mo of age from the National Institute of Aging (NIA) calorie-restricted rodent colony. Calorie restriction was initiated at 14 wk of age in the CR group by the NIA. Rats were housed at the University of Michigan for approximately 1 mo prior to experimentation. During this time, the rats were housed individually in shoebox cages and maintained on a 12:12-h light-dark cycle (lights off at 1700) in specific pathogen-free conditions. Rats were provided chow (AL: NIH31 Chow; CR: NIH31/NIA fortified chow) and water ad libitum. The muscle glucose uptake experiment was performed when the rats were ~30 mo of age. Rats were fasted at ~1900 on the night before the terminal experiment. The following morning at ~0700, exercised rats swam in a barrel filled with water (35°C; ~45 cm depth, 6 rats swimming at time, 3 AL and 3 CR). The exercise protocol consisted of nine bouts of swimming (10-min duration/bout), with 10-min rest intervals separating each exercise bout. After 90 min of total exercise, exercising rats were dried and returned to their cages without food, and epitheliochilears muscles were dissected from anesthetized time-matched sedentary and exercised rats ~4 h after the exercising group had completed the protocol.

**Glucose uptake measurements.** Glucose uptake was measured as described previously (42). At the conclusion of the experiment, rats were anesthetized with sodium pentobarbital (IP 100 mg/kg) and sacrificed by strike of the neck. All procedures involving experimental animals were approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee at The University of Michigan. All efforts were made to minimize suffering and to reduce the number of animals used. The experimental protocol was approved by the USDA/AAALAC Committee on Animal Care.

**Immunoprecipitation and co-IP experiments.** Following in vivo or in vitro experiments, muscles were homogenized in ice-cold lysis buffer containing 1% N-glycosyl-1,2-propanediol poly(ethoxyl)ethyl ether a (IGEPAL), 1% octylphenoxy poly(ethoxy)ethanol a (IGEPAL), 1% octylphenoxy poly(ethoxy)ethanol a (IGEPAL), 1% octylphenoxy poly(ethoxy)ethanol a (IGEPAL), 10% glycerol, 10 mM sodium fluoride, 2 mM EDTA, 10 mM NaF, 10 mM magnesium chloride, 1 mM calcium chloride, 1 mM PMSF, 5 μg/ml leupeptin, 1 tablet/10 ml PhosSTOP (no. 04906837001; Roche, Indianapolis, IN), and 0.1 mM bisphenol bispexorox(1,10-phenanthroline)oxovanadate (no. 203695; Millipore).
the immunopellet was washed, all of the buffer was removed, and the immunopellet was resuspended in 40 μl of the 10 mM Tris-1 mM EDTA, pH 7.5, buffer containing 100 μM magnesium chloride. The reaction was initiated at room temperature by the addition of 5 μl of a phosphorylation mixture containing 880 μCi of [γ-32P]ATP. After 20 min with continuous rotation at 37°C, the reaction was stopped by sequential addition of 20 μl of 8 N hydrochloric acid and 160 μl of chloroform-methanol (1:1). The reaction mixture was vortexed for 5 min and then centrifuged at 3,000 g for 5 min; 50 μl of the organic phase containing the reaction products was spotted onto a thin-layer chromatography (TLC) plate (Whatman, Piscataway, NJ). The products were resolved in a chloroform-methanol-water-ammonium hydroxide (60:47:11.3:2) solution and visualized by autoradiography. The spots corresponding to the phosphorylated phosphatidylinositol-phosphorylated product were scraped from the TLC plate and counted in a scintillation counter.

Coimmunoprecipitation of HSP90, PP2A, and Appl1 with Akt. For evaluation of Akt association with other proteins, 300 μg of protein from each sample was combined with a 1:1,000 titer of AKT antibody and rotated overnight at 4°C. After initial antibody incubation, 50 μl of protein G magnetic beads (no. 10004D; Life Technologies, Grand Island, NY) was added to the lysate-antibody mixture and rotated for 2 h at 4°C. The immuno precipitation matrix (bead-antibody-antigen) for each sample was washed three times with lysis buffer, with complete aspiration of buffer after the final wash, and 30 μl of 2× Laemmli buffer was added. Samples were boiled for 5 min and centrifuged, and supernatants were subjected to 10% SDS-PAGE and blotted for HSP90, PP2A, and Appl1.

Statistical analysis. Two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to assess the main effects of diet (AL or CR) and exercise (sedentary or 3 h postexercise) and the diet × exercise interaction within each insulin level (minus or plus insulin), and the Tukey test was used for post hoc analysis to identify the source of significant variance (SigmaPlot version 11.0; Systat Software, San Jose, CA). Data lacking normal distribution and/or equal variance were mathematically transformed to achieve normality and equal variance prior to two-way ANOVA being run. Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA on ranks was used if transformation failed to normalize the data, and post hoc analysis was performed by Dunn’s method. The Spearman Rank Order Correlation was used to evaluate associations between measured outcomes. Data are presented as means ± SE. A P value of ≤0.05 was accepted as statistically significant.

RESULTS

2-DG uptake. For 2-DG uptake in muscles incubated without insulin (Fig. 1), the 3 h postexercise and CR (3hPEX-CR) group exceeded the sedentary and AL (SED-AL) group (P < 0.05). For 2-DG uptake in muscles incubated with insulin (Fig. 1), there were significant (P < 0.001) main effects of both diet (CR > AL) and exercise (3hPEX > SED) as well as a significant diet × exercise interaction (P < 0.05). Post hoc analysis revealed that 2-DG uptake with insulin in the SED-CR group (P < 0.001) and 3 h postexercise and AL (3hPEX-AL) group (P < 0.05) each exceeded the SED-AL group. The 3hPEX-CR group was greater than both the sedentary and CR (SED-CR) and 3hPEX-AL groups (P < 0.001).

IRS-1-associated PI3K activity. There were no significant effects of diet on IRS-1/PI3K activity in the absence or presence of insulin (Fig. 2). There were also no significant effects of exercise on IRS-1/PI3K activity regardless of insulin concentration.

Immunoblotting. Equal loading of samples was confirmed on the basis of the MemCode results. For all of the phosphorylated proteins, the data were expressed as a ratio of the phosphorylated/total protein values. Expressing the results as phosphorylated/total protein ratio rather than as the phosphorylated protein without dividing by the total protein value did not change the interpretation of the results for any of the proteins that were assessed.

Akt. There was a small (~11%) but significant diet effect (AL > CR, P < 0.01; data not shown) and a diet × exercise interaction (P < 0.05) on total Akt abundance in the muscles incubated without insulin, and post hoc analysis indicated that SED-AL values exceeded SED-CR values (P < 0.001). For
p-Akt Thr308/Akt ratio in the absence of insulin, there were no significant diet or exercise effects (Fig. 3A). For p-Akt Thr308/Akt ratio in the presence of insulin, there were significant effects of diet (CR > AL, P < 0.001) and exercise (3hPEX > SED, P < 0.001) and a significant diet × exercise interaction (P < 0.05; Fig. 3A). Post hoc analysis revealed that both the SED-CR (P < 0.001) and 3hPEX-AL groups exceeded the SED-AL group (P < 0.05), and the 3hPEX-CR group was greater than both the 3hPEX-AL and SED-CR groups (P < 0.001). For the p-Akt Ser473/Akt ratio in the absence of insulin, there was a significant main effect of diet (CR > AL, P < 0.001; Fig. 3B), and post hoc analysis revealed that the SED-CR exceeded the SED-AL group (P < 0.01), and the 3hPEX-CR group was greater than the 3hPEX-AL group (P < 0.01). In the presence of insulin, there were significant main effects of diet (CR > AL, P < 0.001) and exercise (3hPEX > SED, P < 0.001) on the p-Akt Ser473/Akt ratio (Fig. 3B). Post hoc analysis demonstrated that the SED-CR group (P < 0.001) and the 3hPEX-AL group (P < 0.05) were each greater than the SED-AL group, and the 3hPEX-CR group exceeded both the 3hPEX-AL (P < 0.001) and the SED-CR (P < 0.01) groups.

AS160. There were no significant effects of diet or exercise on AS160 total abundance (data not shown). For the ratio of pAS160 Ser588/AS160 in the absence of insulin, there were no significant effects of diet or exercise (Fig. 4A). For the ratio of pAS160 Ser588/AS160 in the presence of insulin, there was a significant effect of diet (CR > AL, P < 0.01; Fig. 4A). Post hoc analysis revealed that SED-CR values exceeded SED-AL values (P < 0.005). For the ratio of p-AS160 Thr642/AS160 in the absence of insulin, there were no significant effects of diet or exercise (Fig. 4B). For the ratio of p-AS160 Thr642/AS160 in the presence of insulin, there was a significant effect of diet (CR > AL, P < 0.001; Fig. 4B). Post hoc analysis revealed that SED-CR values exceeded SED-AL values (P < 0.001) and that 3hPEX-CR values (P < 0.05) exceeded 3hPEX-AL values.

FLNc. FLNc is an Akt substrate (21, 31). CR was recently found to result in greater FLNc Ser2231 phosphorylation in muscles from both 9- and 24-mo-old rats (41, 43), but the effects of exercise alone or exercise combined with CR had not been reported previously. For FLNc in the absence of insulin, there was a small (~6%) but significant diet effect on total abundance (AL > CR, P < 0.005; data not shown) as well as a significant diet × exercise interaction (P < 0.05), and post hoc analysis indicated that SED-AL values were greater than SED-CR values (P < 0.001) and 3hPEX-AL values (P < 0.01). For the FLNc Ser2231/FLNc ratio in the absence of insulin, there was a significant diet effect (CR > AL, P < 0.05; Fig. 5A), and post hoc analysis revealed that the 3hPEX-CR values exceeded 3hPEX-AL values (P < 0.05). For the FLNc Ser2231/FLNc ratio in the presence of insulin, there were significant diet (CR > AL; P = 0.002) and exercise (3hPEX > SED, P < 0.005) effects (Fig. 5A). Post hoc analysis indicated that the SED-CR and 3hPEX-AL groups were greater than the SED-AL group (P < 0.05), and the 3hPEX-CR group was ~18% greater than the 3hPEX-AL and SED-CR groups (P < 0.05).

AMPK. For total AMPK abundance, there was a small (~11%) but significant effect of diet (AL > CR) either without insulin (P < 0.001) or with insulin (P < 0.005) (data not shown). Post hoc analysis indicated that in the absence of insulin, SED-AL exceeded SED-CR (P < 0.001). For the p-AMPK Thr172/AMPK ratio in the absence of insulin, there were significant effects of diet (CR > AL, P < 0.001) and exercise (3hPEX > SED, P < 0.01), and a significant diet × exercise interaction (P < 0.01; Fig. 6A). Post hoc analysis indicated that SED-CR exceeded SED-AL values (P < 0.01) and that 3hPEX-CR exceeded both SED-CR and 3hPEX-AL.
values \((P < 0.001)\). For p-AMPK Thr\(^{172}\)/AMPK ratio in the presence of insulin, there were significant effects of diet (CR > AL, \(P < 0.001\)) and exercise (3hPEX > SED, \(P < 0.005\)) and a significant diet \(\times\) exercise interaction \((P = 0.005; \text{Fig. 6A})\). Post hoc analysis revealed that 3hPEX-CR values were greater than 3hPEX-AL and SED-CR values \((P < 0.001)\).

GLUT4 and hexokinase II. There was a moderate \((-22\%)\) but significant \((P < 0.001)\) exercise effect on GLUT4 abundance \((3h\text{PEX} > \text{SED}; \text{Fig. 7})\), and post hoc analysis indicated that 3hPEX-AL exceeded SED-AL \((P < 0.01)\) and 3hPEX-CR exceeded SED-CR \((P < 0.01)\).

There was a significant main effect of diet \((\text{CR} > \text{AL}, P < 0.05)\) for HSP90 associated with Akt, and post hoc analysis indicated that SED-AL exceeded SED-CR \((P < 0.05; \text{Fig. 9})\). There was also a significant main effect of exercise \((3h\text{PEX} > \text{SED}, P < 0.01)\) for PP2A associated with Akt, and post hoc analysis indicated that SED-CR exceeded 3hPEX-AL \((P < 0.01)\).

Correlations. For insulin-stimulated muscles, 2-DG uptake was significantly correlated with either p-Akt Thr\(^{308}\)/Akt \((r = 0.800, P < 0.0001)\) or p-Akt Ser\(^{473}\)/Akt \((r = 0.793, P < 0.0001)\). The 2-DG uptake of insulin-stimulated muscles was also significantly correlated with p-AS160 Ser\(^{588}\)/AS160 \((r = 0.547, P < 0.0001)\), p-AS160 Thr\(^{642}\)/AS160 \((r = 0.599, P < 0.0001)\), or FLNc Ser\(^{2231}\)/FLNc \((r = 0.657, P < 0.0001)\).}

**DISCUSSION**

The current study was the first to assess both the independent and combined effects of CR and acute exercise on insulin-stimulated glucose uptake and insulin signaling in skeletal muscles from old rats. The most important new observation was that glucose uptake by insulin-stimulated muscles from the combined CR and exercise treatment substantially exceeded SED-AL exceeded SED-CR \((P < 0.01)\) and 3hPEX-AL exceeded 3hPEX-CR \((P < 0.01)\).
the values for either CR or exercise alone. However, to interpret the results of the combined CR and exercise intervention, it is necessary to first consider the independent consequences of CR and exercise on glucose uptake and insulin signaling.

CR alone led to enhanced insulin-stimulated glucose uptake that was accompanied by greater insulin-stimulated Akt phosphorylation on both Ser\(^{473}\) and Thr\(^{308}\) in muscle from sedentary CR vs. AL rats. These observations are consistent with previous research on the effects of CR (6, 16, 28–30, 40, 42, 43). Earlier research in 9-mo-old rats that used a highly selective Akt inhibitor to eliminate the CR effect on Akt phosphorylation revealed that the CR-induced increase in Akt phosphorylation was essential for CR’s enhancement of insulin-stimulated glucose uptake (43). In this context, it seems likely that greater Akt phosphorylation was required for greater...
Akt phosphorylation is not determined solely by PI3K activity. For example, it can also be influenced by its binding to several proteins, including HSP90, PP2A, and Appl1. An earlier study reported that CR resulted in greater HSP90 associated with Akt in epitrochlearis muscle from 9-mo-old rats (42). This result was notable because elevated Akt association with HSP90 can oppose PP2A-mediated Akt dephosphorylation (37). There was a trend for CR alone vs. AL sedentary controls to have greater HSP90 association with Akt, but this trend did not reach statistical significance. There was not a significant effect of CR alone on PP2A or Appl1 binding with Akt in muscle.

A key mechanism linking insulin stimulation of Akt to glucose uptake is the phosphorylation of AS160 on Ser588 or Thr642, the two crucial sites implicated in the control of insulin-stimulated glucose transport. The enhanced Akt phosphorylation with CR alone was accompanied by greater AS160 phosphorylation on both of these sites (42, 43). However, earlier research reported greater insulin-stimulated Akt phosphorylation in epitrochlearis muscles of 24-mo-old CR rats without significant CR-related changes in phosphorylation of AS160 on Ser588 (41) or Thr642 (40). Two differences in the experimental methods of the current study compared with the earlier research were the insulin concentrations (0.6 vs. 1.2 nM) and the ages of the rats (30 vs. 24 mo old). Although there were differences with regard to CR effects on AS160 phosphorylation, each of the earlier studies in old rats as well as the current study reported CR-related elevations in insulin-stimulated Akt phosphorylation and glucose uptake (40, 41).

FLNc is an Akt substrate and actin-binding protein that is selectively expressed in skeletal muscle (21, 31). Actin filament remodeling is implicated in the subcellular distribution of signaling proteins and GLUT4 glucose transporter vesicles (50), and GLUT4 abundance is highly correlated with FLNc abundance in single fibers from rat epitrochlearis muscles (13). Furthermore, insulin leads to increased Ser2231 phosphorylation of FLNc (41, 43). In this context, it is notable that CR led to greater FLNc Ser2231 phosphorylation in the current study as well as in two earlier studies on 9-mo-old and 24-mo-old rats (41, 43). Furthermore, a specific Akt inhibitor that eliminated the CR effects on insulin-stimulated Akt phosphorylation and glucose uptake was accompanied by elimination of the CR effect on FLNc phosphorylation (43). Although these results are interesting, there is currently no evidence that causally links FLNc phosphorylation to insulin-stimulated glucose uptake.

Earlier research has differed with regard to CR’s effect on the activation of muscle AMPK. Several studies reported no CR effect (15, 25, 28, 38, 42), and others reported that CR was characterized by elevated AMPK activation in muscle (1, 33, 34, 47). In the current study, CR alone compared with AL
controls had greater AMPK Thr\(^{172}\) phosphorylation. AMPK is widely believed to regulate insulin-independent glucose uptake (2, 7, 10, 22, 35), but AMPK has also been proposed to indirectly modify insulin sensitivity (32, 36). It is uncertain whether AMPK played a role in the CR-induced increase in insulin-stimulated glucose uptake.

Increased expression of GLUT4 and/or hexokinase II in skeletal muscle can lead to elevated insulin-stimulated glucose uptake (35). However, in the current study, CR did not produce greater GLUT4 protein abundance in muscle. This observation is consistent with several (11, 24, 40, 44) but not all (4) previous studies. The small reduction in hexokinase II abundance in muscle of CR vs. AL rats clearly demonstrates that the CR-related increase in insulin-stimulated glucose uptake was not attributable to greater hexokinase II expression.

Acute exercise alone resulted in a subsequent increase in insulin-stimulated glucose uptake by epitrochlearis muscle from 30-mo-old rats, in agreement with earlier results in 24- to 25-mo-old rats (9, 49). Earlier research indicated that acute exercise did not elevate insulin receptor tyrosine phosphorylation in muscle from old rats (49). The current results were the first to demonstrate that acute exercise did not alter IRS-1/PI3K activity in insulin-stimulated muscle from old rats (49). The current results were the first to demonstrate that acute exercise did not alter IRS-1/PI3K activity in insulin-stimulated muscle from old rats, implicating a more distal insulin signaling step to induce the increased insulin-stimulated glucose uptake.

In this context, it was notable that Akt phosphorylation on both Ser\(^{473}\) and Thr\(^{308}\) was increased in insulin-stimulated muscles after exercise, and this effect was consistent with earlier results for 24-mo-old rats after a similar exercise protocol (49). The greater Akt phosphorylation postexercise was not attributable to increased IRS-1/PI3K activity or greater association of Akt with Apoll. The reduced HSP90 associated with Akt that was observed postexercise would be expected to favor reduced Akt phosphorylation, but the concomitantly reduced PP2A association with Akt would be predicted to favor greater Akt phosphorylation. Some studies of ~2-mo-old rats have reported that acute exercise can enhance the subsequent Akt Thr\(^{308}\) phosphorylation in insulin-stimulated muscle (5, 23, 39), but other studies of young rats have observed increased insulin-stimulated glucose uptake in muscle without postexercise effects on either Akt Thr\(^{308}\) or Akt Ser\(^{473}\) phosphorylation in insulin-stimulated muscles (14, 20, 27, 45). It is possible that the different results reported for Akt phosphorylation in old vs. young rats is related to age differences (~2 compared with 24–30 mo of age). However, it is important to recognize that the exercise protocols also differed in the studies with old rats (8–9 bouts of 10–20 min of exercise for a total of 90 min of exercise) compared with the studies with young rats (either 60–180 min of continuous exercise or 4 bouts of 30 min for 120 min of exercise).

Neither AS160 Thr\(^{422}\) nor AS160 Ser\(^{588}\) phosphorylation was significantly increased in muscles after exercise. Xiao et al. (49) reported significantly increased AS160 Thr\(^{422}\) phosphorylation, with a nonsignificant trend for an increase in AS160 Ser\(^{588}\) phosphorylation in insulin-stimulated muscles ~3–4 h after acute exercise. A single exercise session has previously been reported to increase insulin-stimulated glucose uptake by muscle in young adult rats, concomitant with greater AS160 Ser\(^{588}\) and AS160 Thr\(^{422}\) phosphorylation (7, 14, 23, 39). The current results revealed that, at least in 30-mo-old rats, significantly enhanced AS160 phosphorylation on Ser\(^{588}\) or Thr\(^{422}\) is not essential for enhanced insulin-stimulated glucose uptake by muscle after acute exercise.

The lack of greater AMPK phosphorylation as a result of exercise alone (i.e., 3hPEX-AL vs. SED-AL group) in the current study corresponds with earlier observations from ~2-mo-old rats at a similar time after acute exercise (5, 23, 39). AMPK is implicated in the insulin-independent increase in glucose uptake, so the lack of elevated AMPK phosphorylation several hours after exercise alone is consistent with the observation of no increase in insulin-independent glucose uptake in the 3hPEX group. The lack of increased insulin-independent glucose uptake in the current study is also in agreement with earlier research on old rats (9, 49).

To the best of our knowledge, the current study is the first to test and find that exercise leads to a subsequent increase in FLNc Ser\(^{2231}\) phosphorylation in insulin-stimulated muscles. Akt and FLNc were the only phosphorylated proteins that were increased in insulin-stimulated muscles after exercise alone compared with sedentary controls in the current study. Because FLNc is an Akt substrate, it seems likely that the exercise-related enhancement of Akt activation led to greater FLNc phosphorylation in the insulin-stimulated muscles postexercise.

Increased hexokinase II abundance can result in greater insulin-stimulated glucose uptake by muscle (35), but acute exercise did not alter hexokinase II content. There was a modest but significant increase in GLUT4 protein abundance after exercise in the current study, whereas earlier research did not detect any effect of a similar exercise protocol on epitrochlearis GLUT4 protein content in either 3.5- or 24-mo-old rats (9, 49). However, the current results were not unprecedented, as previous studies have reported that GLUT4 protein content can be moderately increased several hours after one exercise session (35). Greater GLUT4 abundance would be predicted to favor greater insulin-stimulated glucose uptake, but it may not fully account for the greater insulin-stimulated glucose uptake that was observed postexercise.

The primary goal of the current study was to elucidate the mechanisms for the combined effects of CR and acute exercise on muscle glucose uptake in old rats. The most striking outcome was that both Ser\(^{473}\) and Thr\(^{308}\) phosphorylation of Akt were greater in the combined CR and exercise group compared with either CR or exercise treatment alone. There was no evidence that this result was attributable to altered IRS-1/PI3K activity, and the influence of combined CR and exercise on Akt phosphorylation compared with AL sedentary controls was not accounted for by greater changes in Akt binding to HSP90, PP2A, or Apoll. CR alone, but not exercise alone, significantly increased AS160 Ser\(^{588}\) and AS160 Thr\(^{422}\) phosphorylation compared with AL sedentary controls, and no further increase in AS160 phosphorylation was found on either phosphosite when CR was combined with exercise. Other than Akt phosphorylation, the only signaling outcomes found to be greater for muscles from the combined CR and exercise group vs. either the CR or exercise-alone groups were the phosphorylations of AMPK Thr\(^{172}\) and FLNc Ser\(^{2217}\). However, the functional consequences of the greater AMPK and FLNc phosphorylation remain to be established. There were independent effects of CR and exercise on hexokinase II (reduced by CR alone) and GLUT4 (increased by exercise alone). However, combined CR and exercise did not alter these indepen-
dent effects, suggesting that the further increase in glucose uptake in the combined group was secondary to other changes (e.g., insulin signaling and/or GLUT4 vesicle trafficking).

In conclusion, insulin-stimulated glucose uptake was increased by either CR or exercise alone, and combining these treatments produced an additional increase in insulin-stimulated glucose uptake. Analysis of the results for the independent and combined interventions (CR, exercise, or CR combined with exercise) revealed a close correspondence between the increases in glucose uptake and Akt phosphorylation. These results provide evidence that the improved insulin-stimulated glucose uptake may be secondary, at least in part, to greater activation of Akt, presumably as a consequence of greater phosphorylation of one or more Akt substrates. Greater AS160 phosphorylation was evident with CR alone, but the results for exercise alone or combined CR and exercise revealed the need to consider other Akt substrates. In this context, it was interesting that greater FLNc phosphorylation tracked with the levels of both Akt phosphorylation and insulin-stimulated glucose uptake in all treatment groups. The current results provide evidence for investigating the functional significance of this relationship. Our working hypothesis is that, in insulin-stimulated muscles from old rats, greater insulin-stimulated glucose uptake induced by CR and/or exercise depends on greater activation of Akt. It will be important to identify both of the mechanisms responsible for greater Akt activation and the specific Akt substrate(s) that couples the enhanced Akt activation to elevated glucose uptake.

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DISCLOSURES

No conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, are declared by the authors.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

N.S. and G.D.C. conception and design of research; N.S., H.W., E.B.A., and C.M.C. performed experiments; N.S., H.W., and E.B.A. analyzed data; N.S., H.W., E.B.A., and G.D.C. interpreted results of experiments; N.S., H.W., and G.D.C. drafted manuscript; N.S., H.W., E.B.A., C.M.C., and G.D.C. edited and revised manuscript; N.S., H.W., E.B.A., C.M.C., and G.D.C. approved final version of manuscript; H.W. prepared figures.

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