Cut-off values for nocturnal salivary testosterone to enable detection of early puberty

L.J.T.M. van der Sande 1,3, C.J. van den Hoogen 2, A.K. Boer 2, R.J.H. Odink 1

1 Catharina Hospital, Eindhoven, the Netherlands, Department of Pediatrics. 2 Catharina Hospital, Eindhoven, the Netherlands, Department of Clinical chemistry – Endocrinology. 3 Maxima Medisch Centrum, Veldhoven, the Netherlands, Department of Pediatrics.

Introduction

• In the evaluation of suspected delayed puberty in boys, testosterone is one of the crucial hormones in assessing gonadal function.
• The unbound, free fraction of testosterone is considered to be the biological active fraction. Salivary testosterone reflects this free fraction.
• Testosterone levels demonstrate a diurnal pattern during pubertal development.
• Advantages of using salivary testosterone: non-invasive, easy, multiple and nocturnal sampling.
• To date no data are available regarding nocturnal salivary testosterone using LC-MS/MS.

Objective and method

• To establish cut-off values of nocturnal salivary testosterone in prepubertal boys and postpubertal men.
• 20 boys age 6-9 years, 19 men age 18-40 years.
• Collection of saliva at 03.00 a.m. and 08.00 a.m. using Eye Sponge Visitec.
• Analysis by LC-MS/MS.

Results

- As these reference values overlap, cut-off values were determined.
- Based on these cut-off values 81% of samples can be correctly classified as being pre- or postpubertal.

Conclusion

• Nocturnal salivary testosterone can be measured in prepubertal boys and postpubertal men.
• Nocturnal salivary testosterone can be used to assess differences in testosterone levels during day and night.
• Cut-off values defining pre- and postpuberty were established, being 70 pmol/L and 170 pmol/L.
• Using these cut-off values, in 81% of patients pubertal status can be determined correctly using salivary testosterone.
• Future research should focus on defining cut-off values of nocturnal salivary testosterone during puberty and correlating this to Tanner stadia.

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