## Title

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# The Effect of Testosterone Replacement Therapy on Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease in Older Hypogonadal Men+

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**Abstract 251 words**

**Context.** Male hypogonadism is associated with visceral obesity and the metabolic syndrome: factors important for the development of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD). The Testosterone Trials (The T Trials) showed testosterone (T) treatment compared to placebo in older hypogonadal men was associated with decreases in cholesterol and insulin levels suggesting that T treatment may improve NAFLD.

**Objective.** Compare effects of T versus placebo treatment on NAFLD scores and liver scans in elderly hypogonadal men.

**Methods.** Secondary data analyses from 479 older hypogonadal men with total T <275 ng/dL from The T Trials were performed. Three clinical liver fat scores: lipid accumulation product (LAP) index, hepatic steatosis index (his), nonalcoholic fatty liver disease-metabolic syndrome (NAFLD-MS) score, and liver computed tomography (CT) Hounsfield unit (HU) and liver to spleen ratio (LSR) were evaluated at baseline and 12 months after treatment.

**Results.** There were no statistically significant differences of change in LAP index (p=0.98), HSI (p=0.67), and NAFLD-MS (p=0.52) in 246 men treated with T compared to 233 treated with placebo for 12 months. Liver CT showed no statistically significant difference of change in HU (p=0.24; n=71 for T, n=69 for placebo) and LSR (p=0.74; n=55 for T, n=62 for placebo) between the two groups.

**Conclusions.** Our study did not show improvement of NAFLD in older hypogonadal men after 12 months of T versus placebo treatment, as assessed by three clinical scores and liver CT for hepatic steatosis. Future studies with longer treatment

duration and additional NAFLD diagnostic modalities as primary outcome are warranted.


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## Introduction

Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is accumulation of liver fat without excessive alcohol use. NAFLD can progress to nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) and liver cirrhosis. NAFLD prevalence in adults is estimated to be 25.2% globally (1) and more than 34% in the United States (2,3). NAFLD is strongly associated with obesity, especially visceral adiposity, insulin resistance, and metabolic syndrome. Low testosterone (T) levels in men are associated with increased visceral fat, insulin resistance (4,5) and NAFLD (6,7). Men with low total T had higher hepatic steatosis index than men with higher testosterone but there was no difference in indices of hepatic fibrosis between those with low and higher testosterone concentrations (8). Men with low free T were more likely to have NASH than simple steatosis (9,10). In a rodent study, testosterone treatment ameliorated NAFLD in castrated male rats (11). In a prospective study, T undecanoate injections in 312 hypogonadal men followed for eight years reduced Fatty Liver Index (12). A randomized controlled trial of older men treated for six months with T gel did not alter insulin resistance or liver fat (13). In several studies, men with type 2 diabetes or severe obesity and low T, T treatment improved liver steatosis (14-19). Insufficient data are available on the effects of T treatment on NAFLD in hypogonadal men who do not have metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, or severe obesity. Hence, the objective of this manuscript is to analyze available unpublished data including CT imaging from a large, randomized, placebo-controlled study on hypogonadal older men (The T Trials) to address whether T treatment will improve liver steatosis.

In the testosterone trial (The T Trials), 790 men aged 65 and above were enrolled in T transdermal gel versus placebo treatment for 12 months. Testosterone treatment improved sexual function, mood and depressive symptoms compared to placebo (20). A sub-analyses of The T Trials evaluated the effect of T treatment on cardiovascular biomarkers in the enrolled men (21). Twelve months of T treatment compared to placebo decreased total, high density lipoprotein (HDL)- and low density lipoprotein- (LDL) cholesterol. There were small decreases in fasting insulin and homeostatic model assessment-insulin resistance (HOMA-IR) in the T treatment group, but clinical significance of such small changes in insulin resistance were not clear.

We hypothesized that treatment with T in older hypogonadal men will improve NAFLD after 12 months. Using the data from The T Trials, we performed a secondary analysis of available data and evaluated the prevalence of NAFLD in hypogonadal men and the correlations between the clinical NAFLD scores and liver computed tomography (CT) findings in hypogonadal older men at baseline and after 12-month treatment with transdermal T gel.

## Methods

The Testosterone Trials (The T trials)

Our study is a secondary, retrospective analysis of a pre-existing clinical study, called “The T Trials” which were a set of 7 double-blinded, placebo-controlled trials at 12 sites in the United States (20). The data were shared by Peter J Snyder, MD (approved by the University of Pennsylvania), and this secondary analysis study was

approved by the Institutional Review Board of The Lundquist Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. Hypogonadal men aged ≥ 65 years with serum T concentration ≤ 275 ng/dL received either T gel or placebo for 1 year. Androgel® 1% in a pump bottle was used with initial dose of 5 g gel/day. Serum levels of T at 1, 2, 3, 6, and 9 months were measured and the T gel dose was titrated to maintain a serum T concentration from 400 to 800 ng/dL (the reference range for young men of 19 to 40 years).

Briefly, the inclusion criteria for The T Trials included qualification for at least one of three main trials: sexual functional trial, physical function trial and vitality trial. Exclusion criteria for entry into the trial included: history of prostate cancer; high risk of all prostate cancer (>35%) or high-grade prostate cancer (>7) as per Prostate Risk Calculator; International Prostate Symptom Score greater than 19; and medical conditions known to cause hypogonadism. Additional exclusion factors included: use of medications known to alter serum T concentration; high cardiovascular disease risk (myocardial infarction or stroke within 3 months, unstable angina, New York Heart Association class 3 or 4, systolic blood pressure greater than 180, diastolic greater than 100 mm Hg); hemoglobin A1c > 8.5 % (Hgb A1c); serum creatinine > 2.2 mg/dl; body mass index (BMI) >37 Kg/$m^2$; and severe depression (PHQ-9 score ≥ 20) (20,21).

Study Participants

A total of 790 subjects were identified who were 65 years and older with serum T level of 275 ng/dL and below. Of these, 705 men completed a follow up period of 12 months. After excluding subjects who did not have baseline and 12-month laboratory data of hepatic panel (AST and ALT), 502 subjects were analyzed. To

ensure absence of effect of alcohol on the liver, 23 men who drank more than 14 drinks per week were additionally excluded, leaving with a total of 479 men. Of these 479 men, 169 men underwent coronary computed tomographic angiography (CCTA) imaging for atherosclerotic plaque trial because this trial began many months after the main T Trials started. Exclusion for CCTA were as follows: estimated glomerular filtration rate <60 ml/min/1.73m$^2$ or known allergy to iodinated contrast medium; weight >136kg; inability to hold the breath for 10 seconds; a prior diagnosis of tachycardia or irregular heart rhythm; or history of coronary artery bypass graft surgery (22). Among these 169 men, participants were excluded from 12month comparison analysis if subjects did not have both baseline and 12-month CT liver scan data.

Outcome Variables

*Medical History:*

Baseline history included age, BMI, waist circumference (WC), waist hip ratio (WHR), smoking, alcohol use, ethnicity, diabetes mellitus (DM), hypertension (HTN), hyperlipidemia (HLD), coronary artery disease (CAD), myocardial infarction (MI), stroke, obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), use of cholesterol medication, and use of diabetes medication. BMI and WHR were repeated at 12 months after the treatment.

*Laboratory Data:*

Baseline and 12-month laboratory tests included AST (aspartate aminotransferase), ALT (alanine aminotransferase), triglyceride (TG), total (TC), HDL-, LDL- cholesterol, Hgb A1c, HOMA-IR, total and free T concentrations. Serum AST and ALT were

measured at Quest Diagnostics as part of the safety laboratory tests (both within and between runs variations was < 3%); TG and Hgb A1c were measured by Cobas Integra 400, Roche Diagnostics (both within and between assay variation was < 3%); and total T and free T were measured by the Brigham Research Assay Core Laboratory and the inter-assay variation was < 7 % for T and <15 % for free T (23).

*Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease Score:*

Several scoring systems exist for nonalcoholic fatty liver disease scores (24-26). However, based on limited available data, we were able to calculate 3 different scores. First, Lipid Accumulation Product Index (LAP) (27) was calculated using the equation (WC [cm] - 65) * TG [mg/dL]. Cut-off of greater than 30.5 was used for the presence of NAFLD. Second, Hepatic Steatosis Index (HSI) (28) was calculated using the equation 8* ALT/AST ratio + BMI + T2DM (yes = 2, no = 0) + female (yes = 2, no = 0). Cut-off of less than 30 was used for the absence of NAFLD while greater than 36 was used for the presence of NAFLD. Third, Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease in Metabolic Syndrome patients scoring system (NAFLD-MS) (29) was calculated using the equation ALT ≥ 40 U/L (yes = 2, no = 0), AST/ALT ratio ≥ 1 (yes = 1, no = 0), BMI ≥ 25 (yes = 1.5, no = 0), WHR (≥ 0.9 in male and ≥ 0.8 in female; yes = 1, no = 0), T2DM (yes = 1, no = 0). Cut-off of less than 3 was used for absence of NAFLD while 5 or greater was used for presence of NAFLD. All NAFLD scores were calculated for both baseline and 12 months.

Both continuous and categorical variables meeting the cut-off were used in the analysis. The NAFLD scores were calculated using formulae with the Excel® data collection sheet by HSL, then SHH separately calculated the scores using the same

formula. The results from the two investigators were compared and verified by Y. Pak. In addition, if subjects did not report any history of diabetes, for the purpose of calculating these scores, absence of diabetes was assumed.

*CT Scan:*

Non-enhanced -–CCTA images were obtained for atherosclerotic plaque assessment study of The T Trials participants (22). Two readers blinded to the study groups assessed the scan independently. Hepatic and splenic Hounsfield unit (HU) attenuation was measured in two regions of interest (ROI) in the right liver lobe, and the average value was used as liver HU on non-contrast CT scans. Attenuation of one ROI was used for spleen HU (30). Regions of non-uniform parenchyma attenuation including hepatic vessels were excluded. Liver to spleen ratios (LSR) was calculated by taking the mean HU of both right lobe liver ROIs and dividing by spleen HU measurement. Reproducibility of liver and spleen attenuation measurements were performed on 100 randomly selected scans by the first reader for intra-ready variability. When all 100 scans were read, the second reader performed measurements where both intra- and inter-reader variabilities were calculated. The inter-reader and intra-reader correlation coefficient for liver HU were 0.96 and 0.99 and for spleen HU were 0.99 and 0.99 respectively. The differences between two readers mean HU was 0.4 and 0.1 for liver and spleen respectively. The 95% limits of agreement for inter- and intra- reader measurements for liver HU was -5.63 to 5.25 and -2.79 to 2.52, respectively. The 95% agreement for inter- and intra- reader measurements for spleen HU was -5.68 to 7.15 and -3.9 to 4.42, respectively (30). Two methods were used to indicate the presence of NAFLD. NAFLD liver steatosis was diagnosed with CT criteria if liver HU was less than 40 or


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if liver to spleen HU ratio (LSR) was less than 1 (31,32). These data were obtained for both baseline and 12 months. Both continuous and categorical variables meeting the cut-off were used.

Statistical Analysis

Data were summarized using mean with standard deviation (SD) for continuous and frequency with percentage for categorical variables. For the comparison of the baseline characteristics between the two groups (T treated vs. placebo), a two-sample t-test and a Chi-square or Fisher's exact test were used for continuous and categorical variables, respectively. The same tests were used to compare changes between the two groups after treatment. For the correlation analyses of LAP index, HSI and NAFLD-MS score with CT findings of NAFLD, Pearson’s correlation coefficient for normally distributed variables or Spearman's correlation coefficient was computed otherwise. To address missing data in the correlation analysis, we employed a list-wise deletion method. This approach involves dropping any man that has a missing value in at least one of the paired or two specified variables. As a result, the sample size (n) for each correlation estimation may vary depending on the specific pairs being analyzed. P-values less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant. All data analyses were carried out using SAS 9.4 (Cary, NC, USA).

## Results

***Baseline Characteristics:***

Baseline characteristics of the subjects in the T group and placebo group did not show statistically significant differences in age, BMI, race, ethnicity, waist-hip ratio (WHR), smoking status, number of drinks per week. Baseline medical history such as type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension, coronary artery disease, myocardial infarction, and obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) did not show differences in the two groups (Table 1). More subjects in the T gel group had a history of hyperlipidemia (HLD) than the placebo group (79.92% vs 71.30%, p= 0.03), but the number of subjects taking cholesterol or diabetes medications did not show statistically significant differences between the two groups. Lipid panel, AST, ALT, Hemoglobin A1c, and HOMA-IR, did not show difference at baseline in the two groups (Table 1).

***NAFLD scores at baseline:***

The three scores to assess NAFLD in the T group and placebo group did not show statistically significant differences (Table 1). The prevalence of NAFLD defined by LAP index greater than 30.5 was 89.02% in the T group and 90.56% in the placebo group (p=0.65). The prevalence of NAFLD defined by HSI equal or greater than 36 showed similar prevalence of 88.62% in the T group and 89.27% in the placebo group (p=0.88). When prevalence was assessed with NAFLD-MS score (NAFLD-MS score equal or greater than 5), the prevalence was 4.07% in the T group and 3.86% in the placebo group (p=1.00).

***CT findings at baseline:***

The average liver HU was 45.33±12.47 in the testosterone group and 45.37±12.85 in the placebo group and was not significantly different (p=0.98) (Table 1). The liver spleen ratio (LS ratio) was also similar in both groups. The prevalence of NAFLD defined by liver HU was 32.39% in the T group and 27.54% in the placebo group (p=0.58). The prevalence of NAFLD defined by LSR was 21.82% and 20.97% in the T group and the placebo group, respectively (p=1.00).

***Serum total and free T concentration and liver fat score and CT findings:***

Serum total and free T concentrations were not different between the groups at baseline (Table 1). Serum total and free T concentrations did not differ between men with NAFLD or without NAFLD as defined by the clinical scores or the CT HU or LSR (Table 2). After 12 months, the increase in total T level were significantly higher in the T vs placebo group (285.5±266.4 vs 1.98±73.57 ng/dL, p<0.0001) (Table 3). The change in free T was significantly higher, in the T compared to placebo group(107.9±108.8 vs 0.67±24.63 pg/ml, p<0.0001).

***Comparison of NAFLD parameters at baseline and 12 months in T and Placebo treated groups***

Despite significantly higher increase in serum total and free T in the T treated compared to the placebo group, there were no significant differences in BMI, WHR, hemoglobin A1c or HOMA-IR between the two groups (Table 3). The change in prevalence of NAFLD defined by LAP, HSI and NAFLD-MS scores were analyzed in each group. The change in prevalence did not show significant differences after 12 months of treatment between the T and the placebo group (Table 3). Prevalence of subjects with absent /borderline NAFLD defined by HSI or NAFLS-MS score also did

not show significant changes in the T group and placebo group after 12 months. The change in liver HU or LSR did not show significant differences between the T treatment and placebo group at 12 months (Table 3). The prevalence of NAFLD defined by liver HU <40 or liver spleen ratio <1 also did not show significant changes between the two groups (Table 3).

***Subgroups analyses in men with NAFLD***

We then analyzed the effects of 12-month T treatment only on men who met criteria for NAFLD based on LAP (score greater than>30.5), liver HU (<40), or LSR (<1). Within these three subgroups of men with NAFLD, we evaluated 12-month improvement of clinical scores (LAP, HSI, NAFLD-MS) and CT findings (HU and LSR). Across the three subgroups, our study did not show any statistically significance differences in any NAFLD parameters after 12-month in T or placebo treated groups (data not shown).

***Correlation between NAFLD scores and CT:***

Correlation analysis between clinical scores of NAFLD and CT finding were done using LAP index, HSI, and NAFLD-MS. There was a significant inverse correlation between LAP index and liver HU (r= -0.20628, p=0.0008), although no significant correlation was found between the LAP index and LSR (r= -0.12709, p=0.0628). There was no significant correlation between HSI or NAFLD-MS with CT findings. The combined clinical scores LAP index, HSI, and NAFLD-MS did not have any correlation with liver fat estimated by HU or LSR with CT scans.

## Discussion

The prevalence of NAFLD in the United States in the general population is estimated to be at least 34% (2,3) and increases with aging to about 40% in males above 50 years (33). Low testosterone is linked to hepatic steatosis but not to inflammation or fibrosis (8,34). Other studies have also demonstrated that men with lower free T concentrations were more likely to develop NASH versus simple steatosis (9,10). The prevalence of NAFLD in older hypogonadal men in our study was 22 to 30% when assessed by non-contrast liver HU and LSR criteria, which is comparable to other reports (35,36). However, when NAFLD was defined by LAP index (89%), HSI (89%) and NAFLD-MS score (4%) the prevalence was very different, possibly due to overestimation or underestimation of hepatic steatosis status using different scores with different sensitivity and specificity and some scores are designed for special populations with type 2 diabetes or metabolic syndrome (25,29,37,38).

Many different clinical parameters are used for evaluation of NAFLD. LAP index has a sensitivity and specificity of 94% and 85% (37); HSI has a sensitivity of 93% and a specificity of 92% in patients with type 2 diabetes (28,38); and the sensitivity and specificity of NAFLD-MS are 46.0% and 69.8% for patients with metabolic syndrome (29). Our study excluded men with Hgb A1c > 8.5% and BMI > 37 $Kg/m^2$, and few men had metabolic syndrome explaining the low prevalence using NAFLD-MS score. None of the three scores measure liver fibrosis. Among the scores for fatty liver, only LAP index showed inverse correlation to liver HU whereas HSI and NAFLD-MS score failed to show correlation with liver HU or LSR. Other score systems exist that may be more reliable for predicting liver fibrosis. The NAFLD fibrosis score includes age, BMI, impaired fasting glucose, AST, ALT, platelet count and serum albumin

level. The fibrosis-4 index (Fib-4) utilizes age, AST, ALT, and platelet count. The NAFLD fibrosis score and Fib-4 score has correlation with liver cirrhosis (25,26,39). Because our study was not designed to assess the effect of T on liver steatosis, platelet counts were not in The T Trial database. We were only able to calculate LAP index, HSI and NAFLD-MS scores.

In addition to the scores described above, findings from CT may provide more direct assessment of liver steatosis. The HU of liver in unenhanced CT is typically slightly higher than spleen but HU is lowered as the triglyceride in the liver increases. The sensitivity and specificity of unenhanced CT to assess ≧ 30% macrovesicular steatosis is 73% and 100% respectively at a cutoff of 42 HU (40,41). An absolute liver attenuation of less than 40HU in enhanced CT is commonly used in clinical practice to make the diagnosis. Limitation of diagnosis of hepatic steatosis with CT is that HU of unenhanced liver can be confounded by other disorders of deposition, such as iron, copper, glycogen, and amiodarone (42). Utilizing more sensitive imaging modality in assessment of NAFLD may show hepatic steatosis not identified by CT scan in future studies. For instance, magnetic resonance imaging-proton density fraction has high sensitivity of 95% and specificity of 92% in diagnosis of hepatic steatosis, whereas transient elastography had a sensitivity of 86% and specificity of 88 % (43).

In contrast to our hypothesis, there were no differences in the change of NAFLD scores and CT findings between the T and the placebo group after 12 months of treatment. Because the initial study population included both NAFLD and non-NAFLD participants, we questioned whether including non-NAFLD subjects weakened the possible T effects. Subgroup analysis on NAFLD subjects based on

three clinical diagnostic criteria and liver HU and LSR, showed that 12-month T replacement  did not have statistically significant effects on biomarkers of NAFLD. Our results are similar to a 6-month randomized controlled trial of T gel versus placebo treatment of older men with low T levels did not reduce liver fat using magnetic resonance imaging (13). A long-term prospective study when hypogonadal men were administered T undecanoate injections (1000 mg intramuscular injection every 12 week) for 8 years demonstrated significant decrease in Fatty Liver Index (12). The positive effect on decreasing liver steatosis with T undecanoate injections may be related to the decrease in BMI and visceral fat, the higher T concentration attained, and importantly the longer duration treatment of eight years.  In male patients with severe obesity and type 2 diabetes, low serum T was associated with increased prevalence of NAFLD (44,45). Testosterone treatment in men with low testosterone levels and type 2 diabetes or severe obesity reduced hepatic steatosis in some but not all studies (14,15,18,19,46).

In our study HOMA-IR decreased (-0.27±7.42) in the testosterone group but not significantly different from the placebo group that showed no decrease (0.09±5.79) over 12 months. This finding is different from the previous cardiovascular biomarker study of The T Trial that showed testosterone treatment cause very small decreases in  fasting insulin (-1.7uIU.mL, p=0.02) and HOMA-IR (-0.6, p=0.03) that might not be clinically significant(15). The difference is likely due to the smaller sample size as our study included only 246 men compared to 394 men in the cardiovascular biomarker study who were treated with T.

Our study is a randomized, placebo-controlled trial of T gel treatment in older men without uncontrolled diabetes and gross obesity (20). The NAFLD clinical score data were derived from 497 men enrolled in The T Trials with 169 men who had liver CT fat scores. The only other study that examined T gel treatment for 6 months in older hypogonadal men without diabetes and obesity had 73 men that also demonstrated no T effect on hepatic fat (13). The main limitation to our study was The T Trials were not designed to assess NAFLD. Therefore, lack of available clinical diagnostic data of NAFLD prevented the use of other NAFLD scores such as Fib 4 scores. Further studies incorporating such scores may be helpful in determining true effects of T in hypogonadal men with NAFLD. Our imaging modality was limited to liver CT obtained during cardiac imaging, magnetic resonance imaging or elastography may provide additional information. The gold standard of diagnosis for NAFLD is liver biopsy which was invasive and not part of The T trials, and hence not available for our secondary analysis study of pre-existing data from a large randomized, placebo controlled clinical trial. Our study was only 12 months in duration; perhaps a longer duration of treatment with T for two or three years would have allowed improvements in visceral fat and NAFLD.  Therefore, a randomized, placebo-controlled trial protocol is needed to specifically evaluate T effect on NAFLD in hypogonadal men after longer treatment duration.

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**Data Availability Statement**


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The complete data set is available from Dr. Peter J. Snyder at the University of Pennsylvania.


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## Tables

**Table 1. Baseline characteristics of testosterone and placebo group.**

| | Testosterone (n=246) | Placebo (n=233) | P value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age (years) | 72.02±6.01 (n=240) | 72.37±5.81 (n=215) | P=0.52 |
| Body Mass Index (kg/m$^2$) | 31.18±3.49 | 31.09±3.55 | P=0.79 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | (n=246) | (n=233) | |
| Waist to hip ratio | 1.00±0.05 (n=246) | 1.01±0.05 (n=233) | P=0.34 |
| Smoking | 17/240 (7.08%) | 18/216 (8.33%) | P=0.72 |
| Alcohol (drinks/week) | 2.55±3.65 (n=240) | 2.98±4.34 (n=215) | P=0.25 |
| White | 213/240 (88.75%) | 189/216 (87.5%) | P=0.77 |
| Hispanic | 12/239 (5.02%) | 189/216 (87.5%) | P=0.48 |
| **Medical History** | | | |
| Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus | 96/240 (40%) | 81/215 (37.67%) | P=0.63 |
| Hypertension | 173/240 (72.08%) | 152/215 (70.70%) | P=0.75 |
| Hyperlipidemia | 191/239 (79.92%) | 154/216 (71.30%) | P=0.03 |
| Coronary artery disease | 64/240 (26.67%) | 55/215 (25.58%) | P=0.83 |
| History of Myocardial Infarction | 33/240 (13.75%) | 33/215 (15.35%) | P=0.68 |
| History of Stroke | 8/240 (3.33%) | 10/216 (4.63%) | P=0.63 |
| History of obstructive sleep apnea | 52/240 (21.67%) | 47/216 (21.76%) | P=1.00 |
| Cholesterol medications | 174/240 (72.5%) | 139/216 (64.35%) | P=0.06 |
| Diabetes medications | 85/240 (35.42%) | 78/216 (36.11%) | P=1.00 |
| **Labs** | | | |
| AST (units/L) | 24.56±11.06 (n=246) | 24.08±11.09 (n=233) | P=0.63 |
| ALT (units/L) | 23.73±10.30 (n=246) | 23.09±11.84 (n=233) | P=0.52 |
| Triglycerides (mg/dL) | 154.4±177.8 (n=242) | 156.7±84.1 (n=228) | P=0.85 |
| Total Cholesterol (mg/dL) | 162.5±38.02 (n=242) | 168.4±34.62 (n=228) | P=0.08 |
| | Testosterone (n=246) | Placebo (n=233) | P value |


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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| HDL-Cholesterol (mg/dL) | 44.52±12.90 (n=242) | 44.79±15.14 (n=228) | P=0.83 |
| LDL-Cholesterol (mg/dL) | 87.90±1.85 (n=236) | 92.67±30.51 (n=222) | P=0.08 |
| Hemoglobin A1c | 6.26±0.77 (n=245) | 6.30±0.83 (n=229) | P=0.54 |
| HOMA-IR | 5.85 ±6.55 (n=246) | 5.46±5.59 (n=233) | P=0.48 |
| Total T (ng/dL) | 232.6±62.59 (n=245) | 237±62.86 (n=231) | P=0.44 |
| Free T (pg/mL) | 61.07±19.95 (n=239) | 64.72±22.05 (n=228) | P=0.06 |
| **NAFLD scores** | | | |
| LAP (continuous) | 78.32±75.18 (n=246) | 81.10±47.76 (n=233) | P=0.62 |
| LAP > 30.5 (categorical-positive) | 219/246 (89.02%) | 211/233 (90.56%) | P=0.65 |
| HSI (continuous) | 40.83±4.58 (n=246) | 40.71±3.81 (n=233) | P=0.75 |
| HSI ≥ 36 (categorical-positive) | 218/246 (88.62%) | 208/233 (89.27%) | P=0.88 |
| NAFLD-MS (continuous) | 3.52±0.88 (n=246) | 3.49±0.80 (n=233) | P=0.67 |
| NAFLD-MS ≥ 5 (categorical-positive) | 10/246 (4.07%) | 9/233 (3.86%) | P=1.00 |
| **CT scores** | | | |
| Liver HU (continuous) | 45.33±12.47 (n=71) | 45.37±12.85 (n=69) | P=0.98 |
| Liver HU < 40 (categorical-positive) | 23/71 (32.39%) | 19/69 (27.54%) | P=0.58 |
| LSR (continuous) | 1.29±0.72 (n=55) | 1.40±2.07 (n=62) | P=0.70 |
| LSR < 1 (categorical-positive) | 12/55 (21.82%) | 13/62 (20.97%) | P=1.00 |

Mean ± SD for continuous and Frequency (%) for categorical variables were reported. Only those without missing data were included for the purpose of statistical analysis. HOMA-

IR=Homeostatic Model Assessment for Insulin Resistance, T=testosterone, LAP=lipid accumulation product index, HSI=hepatic steatosis index, NAFLD-MS=non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in metabolic syndrome patients scoring system, HU=Hounsfield unit, LSR=liver to spleen ratio.


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**Table 2. Serum total and free T concentrations in men categorized by each clinical or CT score with NAFLD (+) or no NAFLD (-)**

| | Serum Total T (ng/dL) | | | Serum Free T (ng/dL) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | NAFLD + | P | | NAFLD+ | NAFLD- | p |
| LAP index | 233.7±62.94 (n=430) | 244.8±60.12 (n=46) | P=0.25 | 62.78±20.64 (n=422) | 63.55±24.94 (n=45) | P=0.82 |
| HSI index | 233.2±62.81 (n=423) | 246.9±61.00 (n=53) | P=0.14 | 62.41±20.85 (n=415) | 66.39±22.59 (n=52) | P=0.20 |
| NAFLD_MS score | 238.8±60.44 (n=19) | 234.6±62.85 (n=457) | P=0.76 | 63.42±15.93 (n=18) | 62.83±21.26 (n=449) | P=0.90 |
| Liver HU | 242.3±57.97 (n=42) | 233.6±58.21 (N=98) | P=0.42 | 64.93±21.40 (n=41) | 61.89±20.78 (n=97) | P=0.44 |
| LSR | 246.0±59.62 (n=25) | 237.7±57.38 (n=92) | P=0.53 | 69.35±18.05 (n=24) | 61.43±20.45 (n=91) | P=0.09 |

LAP=lipid accumulation product index, HSI=hepatic steatosis index, NAFLD-MS=non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in metabolic syndrome patients scoring system, HU=Hounsfield unit, LSR=liver to spleen ratio.

**Table 3. Change of phenotypic characteristics, laboratory data, NAFLD scores and CT scores from baseline to 12 months in testosterone and placebo group (numerical values).**

| | Changes($\Delta_1$) in 12 months in Testosterone (n=246) | Changes($\Delta_2$)12 months in Placebo (n=233) | Differences of Changes ($\Delta_1$- $\Delta_2$) | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Body Mass Index (kg/m$^2$) | -0.31±1.37 (n=246[1], 246[2]) | -0.33±1.27 (n=233[1], 233[2]) | +0.0269 | P=0.82 |
| Waist to Hip ratio | 0.0011±0.05 (n=246[1], 246[2]) | -0.0001±0.04 (n=233[1], 233[2]) | +0.0012 | P=0.77 |
| T (ng/dL) | 285.5±266.4 (n=245[1], 242[2]) | 1.98±73.57 (n=231[1], 231[2]) | +283.5 | P<0.0001* |
| Free T (pg/mL) | 107.9±108.8 (n=239[1], 235[2]) | 0.67±24.63 (n=228[1], 225[2]) | +107.2 | P<0.0001* |
| Hemoglobin A1c | 0.03±0.46 (n=245[1], 221[2]) | 0.06±0.51 (n=229[1], 211[2]) | -0.0658 | P=0.16 |
| HOMA-IR | -0.27±7.42 (n=246[1], 246[2]) | 0.09±5.79 (n=233[1], 233[2]) | -0.378 | P=0.53 |
| **NAFLD scores** | | | | |
| **LAP** | | | | |
| LAP (continuous) | -6.1±84.8 (n=246[1], 246[2]) | -6.1±39.1 (n=233[1], 233[2]) | -0.083 | P=0.98 |
| LAP ≥ 30.5 (categorial-positive) | 219/246 (89.02%)[1] 203/246 (82.52%)[2] | 211/233 (90.56%)[1] 209/233 (89.70%)[2] | | P=0.87 |
| **HSI** | | | | |
| HSI (continuous) | -0.04±2.17 (n=246[1], 246[2]) | 0.05±2.25 (n=233[1], 233[2]) | -0.09 | P=0.67 |
| HSI ≥ 36 (categorical-positive) | 218/246 (88.62%)[1] 209/246 (84.96%)[2] | 208/233 (89.27%)[1] 209/233 (89.70%)[2] | | P=0.20 |


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|---|---|---|---|---|
| HSI 30-35 (categorical-borderline) | 28/246 (11.38%)[1]<br>37/246 (15.04%)[2] | 25/233 (10.73%)[1]<br>23/233 (9.87%)[2] | | P=0.13 |
| | Changes($\Delta_1$) in 12 months in Testosterone (n=246) | Changes($\Delta_2$)12 months in Placebo (n=233) | Differences of Changes ($\Delta_1$- $\Delta_2$) | P value |
| HSI < 30 (categorical-negative) | 0/246 (0%)[1]<br>0/246 (0%)[2] | 0/233 (0%)[1]<br>1/233 (0.43%)[2] | | n/a |
| **NAFLD-MS** | | | | |
| NAFLD-MS (continuous) | -0.36±0.96 (n=246[1], 246[2]) | -0.31±0.89 (n=233[1], 233[2]) | -0.05 | P=0.52 |
| NAFLD-MS≥ 5 (categorical-positive) | 10/246 (4.07%)[1]<br>2/246 (0.81%)[2] | 9/233 (3.86%)[1]<br>2/233 (0.86%)[2] | | P=0.97 |
| NAFLD-MS 3-4 (categorical-borderline) | 173/246 (70.33%)[1]<br>160/246 (65.04%)[2] | 173/233 (74.25%)[1]<br>149/233 (63.95%)[2] | | P=0.24 |
| NAFLD-MS < 3 (categorical-negative) | 63/246 (25.61%)[1]<br>84/246 (34.15%)[2] | 51/233 (21.89%)[1]<br>82/233 (35.19%)[2] | | P=0.51 |
| **CT scores** | | | | |
| Liver HU (continuous) | 0.80±11.15 (n=71[1], 65[2]) | -1.49±10.03 (n=69[1], 53[2]) | 2.29 | P=0.24 |
| Liver HU < 40 (categorical-positive) | 23/71 (32.39%)[1]<br>16/65 (24.62%)[2] | 19/69 (27.54%)[1]<br>13/53 (24.53%)[2] | | P=0.21 |
| LSR (continuous) | 0.17±1.39 (n=55[1], 52[2]) | 0.27±1.50 (n=62[1], 46[2]) | -0.10 | P=0.74 |
| LSR < 1 (categorical-positive) | 12/55 (21.82%)[1]<br>11/52 (21.15%)[2] | 13/62 (20.97%)[1]<br>14/46 (30.43%)[2] | | P=0.69 |

Mean ± SD for continuous and Frequency (%) for categorical variables were reported. Only those without missing data were included for the purpose of statistical analysis. [1] Baseline. [2]After 12months treatment.

HOMA-IR=Homeostatic Model Assessment for Insulin Resistance, T=testosterone**,** LAP=lipid accumulation product index, HSI=hepatic steatosis index, NAFLD-MS=non-alcoholic fatty liver disease in metabolic syndrome patients scoring system, HU=Hounsfield unit, LSR=liver to spleen ratio.


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