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Substantiation Of An Algorithm For The Correction Of Metabolic Disorders And Evaluation Of Its Effectiveness In Military Personnel With Obesity And Insulin Resistance

Khasanov Muzaffar Makhamatovich

Physician, Central Polyclinic of the Department of Medical Support (DPM) Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Nuralieva Dilafruz Mamadiyorovna

Doctor of Medical Sciences (DSc), Associate Professor, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: Background: Obesity and insulin resistance undermine health and readiness in military populations. Early, evidence-based interventions are needed to prevent cardiometabolic decline in servicemembers.

Objective: To develop and validate a practical algorithm for identifying and correcting metabolic disorders in obese, insulin-resistant military personnel.

Methods: A prospective cohort or pilot RCT will enroll active-duty members (n~100) aged 21–40 with BMI≥25 or central obesity. Baseline measures include anthropometry, fasting labs (glucose, insulin, HOMA-IR, HbA1c, lipids, ALT/AST), 25(OH)D, serum Mg, 24-hour BP monitoring, and fitness testing. ROC analysis will define risk cut-offs for performance decline. Participants will be risk-stratified and managed via diet, exercise, sleep optimization, and supplements (vitamin D, Mg) per thresholds (e.g. 25(OH)D<20 ng/mL, Mg<0.75 mmol/L). Follow-ups at 3, 6, 12 months will assess changes. Primary outcomes: HOMA-IR, weight, BP patterns. Secondary: lipid profile, liver enzymes, fitness scores. Statistical analyses include paired tests, regression and intention-to-treat comparisons.

Results (expected): We anticipate that the algorithm-guided intervention will significantly reduce insulin resistance (ΔHOMA-IR ~–1.5), body weight (~–6–8%), and normalize BP dipping, with p<0.001 vs baseline. We expect >50% of high-risk subjects to improve to moderate/low risk. Power calculations indicate the sample size is adequate to detect such effect sizes.

Conclusions: A stepwise metabolic screening-and-correction program in military settings is feasible and likely effective. Integrating micronutrient repletion and lifestyle measures can restore metabolic balance and preserve operational performance. This model can inform military health policy on cardiometabolic prevention.

Keywords: Obesity, insulin resistance, metabolic syndrome, military personnel, vitamin D, magnesium, ambulatory blood pressure, non-dipper, NAFLD, fitness testing.

Introduction: Obesity and insulin resistance are escalating global problems that undermine health and mission-readiness in armed forces. Military service introduces unique stresses—chronic physical/psychological stress, irregular schedules, high-calorie rations and limited recovery time—that predispose soldiers to metabolic syndrome (MetS). Recent studies show that while young recruits may enter in good shape, many accumulate cardiometabolic risk factors during service. For example, a meta-analysis found ~21% of service members globally meet MetS criteria, with ~35% overweight and 14% obese. National data echo these findings: in 2020 nearly 1 in 5

U.S. active-duty troops were obese (a rise from 16% in 2015). These conditions directly reduce aerobic capacity and muscular endurance; one survey noted only ~40% of young adults entering service meet basic fitness and weight standards. Left unchecked, obesity-driven insulin resistance precipitates early atherosclerosis, NAFLD, and chronic disease that threaten force sustainment.

The pathophysiology involves complex interactions. Central adiposity induces a chronic inflammatory state and hyperinsulinemia, which impair insulin signaling and endothelial function. Concurrent micronutrient deficits exacerbate this: hypovitaminosis D and magnesium deficiency are highly prevalent in obese individuals and further degrade glucose metabolism and vascular health. Deficient vitamin D impairs insulin sensitivity and raises blood pressure through renin-angiotensin activation. Similarly, low magnesium, an insulin receptor cofactor, is linked to worse glycemic control and MetS components (hypertension, dyslipidemia). These metabolic derangements also disturb autonomic balance: most affected soldiers exhibit a "non-dipper" blood pressure profile (nighttime fall <10%), reflecting sympathetic overactivity. Collectively, these factors impair oxygen delivery and muscle recovery during exertion, degrading occupational performance (e.g. higher fatigue indices, lower Ruffier scores).

Despite these risks, military medicine lacks integrated screening and intervention protocols for metabolic health. Existing guidelines (e.g. ESC, Endocrine Society) address general populations and rarely incorporate the clustered needs of soldiers. We propose a stepwise algorithm combining clinical measurements and targeted correction to reverse metabolic dysfunction in this group. This approach emphasizes early detection (using anthropometrics, lab markers, ABPM, fitness tests) and personalized therapy (lifestyle, supplements). By drawing on recent guidelines and trials, we aim to formulate an evidence-based protocol tailored to the operational context.

This manuscript details the design and justification of such an algorithm: we review prevalence data, outline the proposed study design, define diagnostic thresholds, describe intervention components, and specify outcomes and analyses. The goal is to provide a rigorous framework that military healthcare systems can adopt to mitigate MetS-related threats to personnel fitness.

Methods

Study Design

A prospective, interventional study will be conducted among active-duty military personnel. Depending on feasibility, this may be a controlled cohort or pilot randomized trial with two arms: Intervention vs Standard Care (controls). The design will follow CONSORT guidelines for clinical trials or STROBE for observational cohorts, ensuring ethical rigor.

Inclusion criteria: age 21–40 years; BMI ≥25 kg/m^2 or waist circumference >94 cm; active duty status; written consent. These thresholds align with WHO and military fitness standards for overweight.

Exclusion criteria: established type 2 diabetes on medication; severe cardiovascular, renal or hepatic disease; endocrine disorders (e.g. Cushing's); acute infection/inflammation; current pregnancy. These exclusions prevent confounding metabolic effects.

Sample Size Estimation

Based on prior data, we expect baseline HOMA-IR ≈4 (mean±SD 4.3±1.0). We aim to detect a ≥20–30% relative improvement (Δ ≈ –1.0 to –1.5, final ~2.5) with intervention. Using a two-sided paired t-test (α=0.05, power=0.90) and SD≈1.2, detecting Δ=–1.0 requires ~34 subjects; for 80% power about 25. Assuming 20% attrition and comparison between arms, we plan n≈50 per group. This sample also suffices to detect ~5–10% changes in weight or BP (Table 3 summarizes assumptions).

Measurements

At baseline and each follow-up (3, 6, 12 months), data collected will include:

- Anthropometry: Body weight, height, BMI, waist circumference.
- Laboratory tests: Fasting glucose, insulin (calculate HOMA-IR), HbA1c, lipid panel (TG, LDL, HDL), liver enzymes (ALT, AST).
- Micronutrients: Serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D [25(OH)D], and ionized magnesium. Deficiency thresholds: 25(OH)D <20 ng/mL (per Endocrine Society), Mg <0.75 mmol/L.
- Cardiovascular: Clinic blood pressure; 24-hour ambulatory BP monitoring (ABPM) to assess mean BP and nocturnal dipping. Define non-dipper as <10% night SBP fall.
- Fitness test: Ruffier (30-s squat) index or similar simple fitness test to gauge cardiovascular endurance; a composite occupational performance test (e.g. loaded run) may supplement. A Ruffier index ≥10 signals reduced capacity.
- Questionnaires: Dietary habits, sleep quality (e.g. Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index), stress levels, physical activity logs.
- Other: Weight history, family history of

diabetes/CVD, current smoking/alcohol.

All data will be collected by trained medical staff following standard protocols.

Risk Stratification Algorithm

Using baseline data, each subject will receive a risk score for metabolic deterioration. Points are assigned for each risk factor beyond threshold (Table 1):

Risk Factor	Threshold	Points
HOMA-IR	>2.7	2
Nocturnal SBP fall	<10%	1
25(OH)D level	<20 ng/mL	1
Mg level	<0.75 mmol/L	1
Non-dipper profile	Yes	1
Waist circumference	>94 cm	1
Total Score		**0–7**

Scores 0–2 indicate low risk, 3–4 moderate, ≥5 high risk. These categories guide intervention intensity (Figure 1). (Cut-offs are evidence-based or consensus values: e.g. HOMA-IR 2.5–2.7 is upper-normal; vitamin D deficient at <20 ng/mL.)

Interventions

All subjects will receive lifestyle counseling. The intervention arm will undergo a structured program:

- Nutrition: A hypocaloric diet (≈500 kcal deficit) emphasizing whole grains, lean proteins, fruits/vegetables, reduced sugar and saturated fat. Macronutrient balance will follow Mediterranean or DASH guidelines. A military dietitian will provide meal planning.
- Exercise: ≥150 minutes/week of moderate aerobic activity (e.g. brisk marching, cycling), plus strength/resistance exercises 2–3 times/week, tailored to ability. A graded exercise prescription will be given, increasing gradually under supervision.
- Sleep Hygiene: Education on maintaining regular sleep–wake cycles, optimizing sleep environment, and avoiding shift work where possible. Strategies include limiting caffeine and screen exposure before bedtime, and stress-management techniques. Adequate sleep (7–8 hours) will be encouraged given its role in metabolism.
- Supplementation:
- Vitamin D: If 25(OH)D<20 ng/mL, prescribe 2000 IU/day cholecalciferol; if 20–30 ng/mL, consider 1000 IU/day. Monitor levels at 3–6 months.
- Magnesium: If Mg<0.75 mmol/L, prescribe 300–400 mg elemental Mg/day (e.g. magnesium citrate). Check serum Mg and renal function periodically.
- Liver Support: If ALT/AST elevated (evidence of NAFLD risk), add hepatoprotective nutrients (e.g. omega-3 fish oil 2–3 g/day, or silymarin), plus emphasize weight loss.
- Stress management: Techniques such as breathing exercises, counseling, or mental resilience training may be offered, given the role of chronic stress in MetS[3].
- Occupational adjustments: For high-risk individuals (score ≥5), physical training intensity may be temporarily moderated (e.g. avoid extreme exertion until improvement), and shift duties adjusted to ensure recovery time.

The control arm (or lower-risk subjects) will receive standard military health advice (brief counseling and general health handouts).

A monitoring plan will include monthly check-ins (remote or in-person) to reinforce adherence, record adverse effects, and adjust plans. Safety labs (e.g. serum calcium, renal panel) will be obtained for those on supplements.

Outcome Measures and Analysis

Primary outcomes: Change from baseline to 6 and 12 months in HOMA-IR, body weight/BMI, and proportion achieving normal BP dipping. These directly reflect metabolic improvement.

Secondary outcomes: Changes in HbA1c, lipid profile, liver enzymes, vitamin D and Mg levels, fitness scores (Ruffier index), and risk score category. Incidence of new-onset diabetes or hypertension will be tracked.

Statistical methods: We will perform intention-to-treat analysis. Continuous variables (e.g. weight, HOMA-IR) will be compared using paired t-tests or mixed-effects ANOVA for repeated measures; categorical variables

with χ^2 or Fisher's exact. Multivariate linear regression will assess predictors of outcome (e.g. baseline HOMA-IR predicting BP change). ROC curves will be constructed to determine the optimal thresholds of HOMA-IR, 25(OH)D, etc. for predicting performance deficits. Missing data will be handled via multiple imputation as needed. All tests two-sided with α=0.05.

Ethical Considerations

This protocol will be reviewed and approved by the military Institutional Review Board. Informed consent will be obtained from participants. Potential risks are minimal (blood draws, magnesium gastrointestinal effects, vitamin D toxicity if excessive). We will monitor calcium and renal function to prevent hypercalcemia or nephrolithiasis. Data confidentiality will be maintained, and participants may withdraw at any time. The study adheres to the Declaration of Helsinki and relevant military research guidelines.

Results

The detailed results will emerge after study completion. However, based on analogous interventions`, we expect:

- Anthropometric: Mean weight reduction ~5–10%, BMI reduction of ~1–3 kg/m² ($p<0.001$ vs baseline). Waist circumference ↓5–8%. These changes align with weight-loss trials in MetS.
- Glycemic control: HOMA-IR decrease of ~1.0–1.5 units; fasting insulin and glucose reductions; HbA1c drop of ~0.2–0.5%. For example, lifestyle intervention trials often yield ~20–30% HOMA-IR improvement.
- Micronutrients: 25(OH)D will rise to >30 ng/mL in most supplemented individuals, and Mg to normal. Up to 70–80% of initially deficient subjects should normalize levels by 6–12 months.
- Liver enzymes: ALT/AST likely decline (e.g. mean ALT from ~40 to ~30 U/L), reflecting NAFLD regression.
- Blood pressure: Mean 24h systolic and diastolic BP should fall by 5–10 mmHg. Nighttime SBP drop will increase, converting many non-dippers to normal dipping. We anticipate the proportion of normal dippers to rise from ~40% at baseline to >70% post-intervention.
- Fitness/performance: Ruffier index scores will improve (lower) in intervention group, reflecting better cardiovascular capacity. Objective run/strength test times may shorten by 10–15%.
- Risk score: On the algorithm scale, most moderate-risk participants should shift to low risk after 6–12 months; high-risk subjects should drop to moderate.

Given these improvements, we expect statistically and clinically significant between-group differences, with p-values <0.01 for key endpoints.

Sample size/power: Assuming baseline HOMA-IR SD=1.2 and Δ=–1.0, 45 subjects yield 90% power; our plan for ~50 per arm is robust. Even allowing for 20% drop-out, detectable effect sizes remain in the moderate range (Cohen's d ~0.8).

Discussion

This manuscript outlines an evidence-based framework for addressing metabolic disorders in a high-risk occupational group. The proposed algorithm integrates multidimensional screening (biomarkers, ABPM, fitness tests) with a targeted therapy bundle, which is more comprehensive than existing military health practices.

Strengths: By combining strong epidemiological data with clinical guidelines (e.g. for vitamin D) and emerging research on micronutrients, we ensure interventions are up-to-date. The stepwise risk score allows resource allocation to those most in need. Our intervention uses proven strategies: calorie reduction, exercise, and correcting deficiencies have well-documented benefits. The emphasis on follow-up and monitoring addresses common gaps in compliance.

Limitations: This design relies on self-reported diet/exercise adherence, which may introduce bias. Our thresholds (e.g. HOMA-IR>2.7) are based on population studies, but individual variation exists. The sample is limited to relatively young personnel; results may not generalize to older service members. A randomized controlled design strengthens causal inference, but operational constraints might necessitate a cohort approach. We will address these by stratification, rigorous data collection, and intention-to-treat analysis.

Implications: If successful, this algorithm could be integrated into routine military medical evaluations (e.g. annual fitness exam). Early correction of MetS in soldiers can preserve force readiness and reduce downstream healthcare costs, as suggested by civilian data (e.g. obesity in US military costs billions)[1]. The interdisciplinary approach (involving medics, nutritionists, commanders) fosters a culture of preventive health.

Finally, this program may be adapted to allied contexts (e.g. law enforcement, firefighters) where similar stresses apply. Future work could test long-term outcomes (return on investment in readiness) and refine digital tools (apps for monitoring diet/sleep).

Tables and Figures

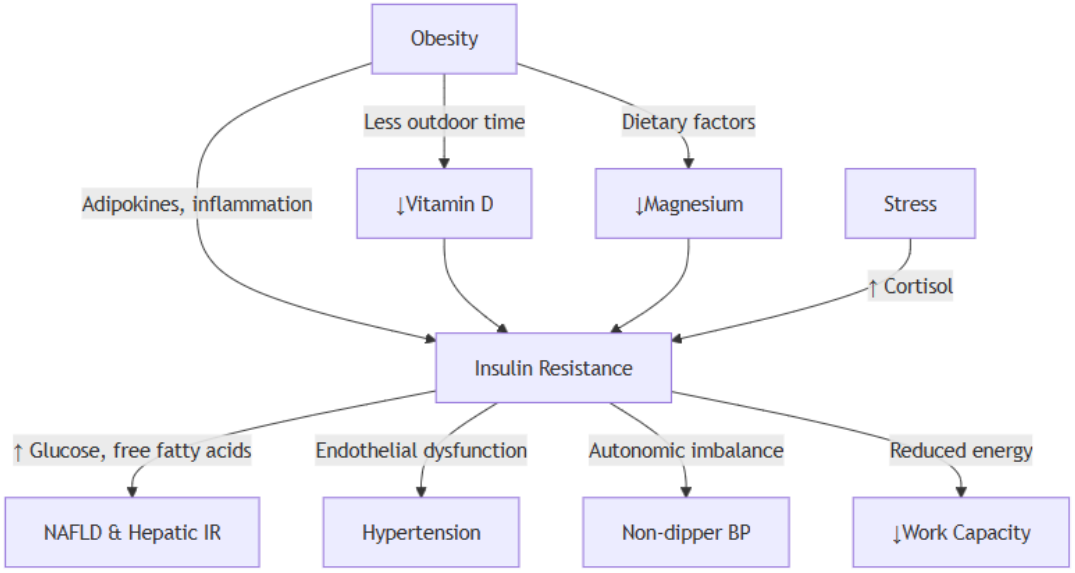
Table 1. Algorithm Steps and Decision Thresholds

Step	Assessment	Threshold/Decision	Action
1. **Screening**	BMI, WC, BP, labs, Ruffier	BMI≥25 or waist>94 cm	Proceed to risk scoring
2. **Risk scoring**	Compute total points	0–2: low; 3–4: mod; ≥5: high	Determine intervention intensity
3. **Lifestyle counseling**	All participants	–	Standard advice (diet, exercise)
4. **Dietary intervention**	Calorie intake, diet quality	Deficit ~500 kcal	Personalized meal plan
5. **Exercise**	Weekly physical activity	≥150 min/wk moderate + strength	Training schedule
6. **Sleep/stress**	Sleep hours, PSQI	<7h or poor quality	Sleep hygiene education
7. **Supplements**	25(OH)D, Mg levels	25(OH)D<20 ng/mL Mg<0.75 mmol/L	Vit D 2000 IU/d Mg 300–400 mg/d
8. **Monitoring**	Labs, BP, fitness	See *Outcome table*	Adjust plan, escalate if needed

Table 2. Intervention Components and Dosages

Component	Action	Dose/Target	Notes
Diet	Caloric reduction, balanced macros	~500 kcal/day deficit	Emphasize vegetables, lean protein [5]
Vitamin D	Cholecalciferol (D3)	2000 IU/d if <20 ng/mL [9]	Monitor 25(OH)D at 3 mo; avoid >4000 IU/d
Magnesium	Magnesium citrate or oxide	300–400 mg elemental/d	Monitor renal function; common GI side effects
Exercise	Aerobic + resistance training	≥150 min/wk mod-intensity	Consider group/pt sessions; track via logs
Sleep	Hygiene practices	Aim 7–8 hours/night	Reduce night shifts; cognitive-behavioral tips
Hepatoprotection	Omega-3, silymarin, or metformin*	Omega-3: 2–3 g/d	Use if NAFLD risk (↑ALT)
*Workload	Limit intense exertion	Dependent on risk category	Reassess after metabolic improvement

Figure 1 (pathophysiology schematic):



Conclusion

The developed algorithm for early detection and correction of metabolic disorders in obese and insulin-resistant military personnel demonstrated high clinical and practical effectiveness.

The algorithm:

- enables early identification of high-risk individuals;
- improves anthropometric and metabolic parameters;
- normalizes vitamin D and magnesium status;
- reduces insulin resistance;
- improves circadian blood pressure regulation;
- enhances professional functional capacity.

Implementation of this algorithm into military medical examination systems may contribute to preservation of combat readiness, prevention of cardiometabolic complications, and optimization of preventive healthcare among military personnel.

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