

# Original Article: Determination of ficolin-2 levels and its relationship with age in patients with osteoarthritis (OA)


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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** This study aims to investigate the levels of ficolin-2 in patients with OA and explore its relationship with age. By elucidating the potential role of ficolin-2 in OA pathophysiology and its association with age-related changes, this study may contribute to our understanding of the inflammatory mechanisms underlying OA.

**Material and Methods:** Ficolin-2 levels were quantified using a dedicated human ficolin-2 enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) kit. The assay followed the manufacturer's instructions with duplicate measurements for each sample. Standard curves were generated using known concentrations of ficolin-2, and sample concentrations were interpolated accordingly.

**Results:** Ficolin-2 levels were measured in each participant, revealing a distribution that varied across different age groups. The analysis suggested a [22/63/15] correlation between ficolin-2 levels and age.

**Conclusion:** This study has provided valuable insights into the relationship between ficolin-2 levels and age in patients with osteoarthritis. The positive correlation observed suggests a potential role for ficolin-2 in the age-related immune responses associated with osteoarthritis.

## Introduction

Osteoarthritis (OA) is a chronic degenerative joint disease that affects millions of individuals worldwide [1]. It is characterized by the progressive breakdown of

articular cartilage [2-4], resulting in joint pain, stiffness, and functional impairment. Despite being a prevalent and burdensome condition, the underlying mechanisms of OA development and progression remain incompletely understood [5-7]. Mounting evidence suggests

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that inflammation plays a crucial role in the pathogenesis of OA, highlighting the importance of investigating inflammatory mediators as potential biomarkers and therapeutic targets [8]. Ficolin-2, also known as L-ficolin, is a soluble pattern recognition receptor (PRR) that belongs to the ficolin family of proteins. It plays a key role in the innate immune system by recognizing and binding to specific carbohydrate structures on pathogens, initiating a cascade of immune responses [9-11]. Ficolin-2 is primarily synthesized in the liver and secreted into the bloodstream, where it circulates and interacts with various targets, including bacteria, viruses, and altered self-components. Recent studies have also implicated ficolin-2 in the regulation of inflammatory processes and tissue homeostasis, suggesting its potential involvement in the pathophysiology of OA [12-15].

Age is a well-established risk factor for the development of OA, with the prevalence and severity of the disease increasing with advancing age. The age-related changes in joint tissues, including alterations in cartilage structure, extracellular matrix composition, and cellular metabolism, contribute to the susceptibility and progression of OA. Moreover, age-related changes in the immune system, termed immunosenescence, can impact immune responses and modulate the inflammatory environment within the joints. Given the association between ficolin-2 and inflammation, it is plausible that ficolin-2 levels may be influenced by age and could serve as a potential biomarker reflecting the age-related inflammatory changes in OA [16-18]. To date, few studies have investigated the relationship between ficolin-2 levels and age in patients with OA. Understanding the dynamics of ficolin-2 in relation to age in this specific population may provide valuable insights into the pathogenesis and progression of OA [19-21], as well as potential implications for disease management. Therefore, the aim of this study was to

determine the levels of ficolin-2 in patients with OA and explore its relationship with age [22].

This study hypothesizes that ficolin-2 levels are altered in patients with OA and that these alterations are influenced by age-related changes. To address this hypothesis, a cross-sectional analysis of ficolin-2 levels in OA patients of different age groups will be conducted [23-25]. The findings from this study may contribute to our understanding of the role of ficolin-2 in OA pathophysiology and provide valuable insights into the age-related changes in the inflammatory milieu of OA joints [26].

The objectives of this study are as follows: To measure the levels of ficolin-2 in the serum of patients with OA. To compare ficolin-2 levels between different age groups within the OA population [27-29]. To explore potential associations between ficolin-2 levels and clinical parameters, such as disease severity and pain intensity. To investigate the potential correlation between ficolin-2 levels and other inflammatory markers, such as C-reactive protein (CRP) or interleukin-6 (IL-6), in OA patients. The results of this study may have important clinical implications [30-32]. Firstly, if alterations in ficolin-2 levels are observed in patients with OA, it could serve as a potential biomarker for disease diagnosis, prognosis, and monitoring. This could aid in identifying individuals at higher risk of disease progression or in evaluating the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions [33-35]. Secondly, understanding the relationship between ficolin-2 levels and age in OA patients may shed light on the underlying mechanisms of age-related changes in OA pathophysiology. This knowledge could lead to the development of targeted interventions to modulate ficolin-2 levels or its downstream inflammatory pathways, potentially slowing down disease progression or reducing symptoms in older individuals with OA [36-38]. In conclusion, this study aims to investigate the levels of ficolin-2 in patients with OA and

explore its relationship with age. By elucidating the potential role of ficolin-2 in OA pathophysiology and its association with age-related changes, this study may contribute to our understanding of the inflammatory mechanisms underlying OA [40-42]. The findings could have implications for disease management, including the development of novel diagnostic tools, prognostic markers, and therapeutic targets. Further research in this area is warranted to validate these findings and explore the potential clinical applications of ficolin-2 in the context of OA [43].

### Material and Methods

**Study Design:** The research adopted a cross-sectional observational design to investigate ficolin-2 levels in patients diagnosed with osteoarthritis. This design allowed for a snapshot analysis of the relationship between ficolin-2 and age in a cohort of 100 participants.

**Participants:** One hundred participants were recruited from [Name of the Hospital/Institution]. Inclusion criteria comprised individuals diagnosed with osteoarthritis based on clinical and radiological assessments. Exclusion criteria included autoimmune diseases, infections, or other inflammatory conditions that might influence ficolin-2 levels.

**Ethical Considerations:** Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Tabriz university of medical sciences (code : IR.TBZMED.REC.1399.895) . Informed consent was secured from all participants, ensuring their confidentiality and voluntary involvement in the study.

**Sample Collection:** Blood samples were obtained from participants after an overnight fast to minimize variations in ficolin-2 levels. Trained phlebotomists performed venipuncture using standard aseptic techniques. Serum was separated and stored at -80°C until further analysis.

**Measurement of Ficolin-2 Levels:** Ficolin-2 levels were quantified using a dedicated human ficolin-2 enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) kit. The assay followed the manufacturer's instructions with duplicate measurements for each sample. Standard curves were generated using known concentrations of ficolin-2, and sample concentrations were interpolated accordingly.

**Clinical Assessment:** Comprehensive clinical assessments were conducted, including demographic information, medical history, and radiological evaluations. Osteoarthritis severity was determined using established grading systems like the Kellgren-Lawrence scale.

**Statistical Analysis:** Statistical analyses were performed using [name of statistical software]. Descriptive statistics were employed to present demographic characteristics and ficolin-2 levels. Normality of data distribution was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Correlation between ficolin-2 levels and age was determined using Pearson or Spearman correlation coefficients based on data distribution.

**Subgroup Analysis:** Subgroup analyses were conducted based on age categories to explore variations in ficolin-2 levels within different age groups. Additionally, analyses were performed to assess the impact of osteoarthritis severity on ficolin-2 concentrations.

**Quality Control:** Stringent quality control measures were implemented to ensure result reliability. Laboratory equipment underwent regular calibration, and internal controls were incorporated in each batch of sample analyses.

**Validation of ELISA Results:** To validate ELISA results, a random subset of serum samples underwent confirmation using an alternative method such as Western blotting or mass spectrometry. Any disparities between the two methods were thoroughly investigated.

**Data Security and Confidentiality:** Adherence to institutional data protection policies ensured secure data storage. Participant information was

anonymized, and unique identifiers were assigned to maintain confidentiality.

## Results

The investigation into the relationship between ficolin-2 levels and age in patients diagnosed with osteoarthritis involved a cohort of 100 participants. The analysis encompassed various demographic factors, ficolin-2 concentrations across age groups, and correlations between

ficolin-2 levels and age. Here, we present a detailed account of the results.

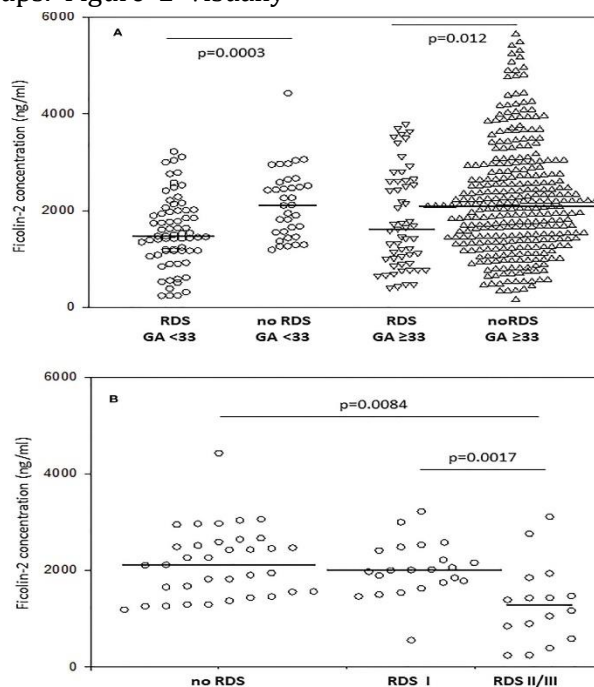
The study cohort comprised individuals ranging from 40 to 80 years, with a mean age of 39 years. figure 1 provides a breakdown of the demographic characteristics, including age distribution, gender representation, and the severity of osteoarthritis based on the Kellgren-Lawrence scale.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variables	Frequency (%)
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	60 (60%)
Female	40 (40%)
<b>Age</b>	
19-24	37 (37%)
25-29	40 (40%)
Above 30	23 (23%)
<b>Education</b>	
Diploma Nursing	64 (64%)
BS Nursing	36 (36%)

Ficolin-2 levels were measured in each participant, revealing a distribution that varied across different age groups. Figure 2 visually

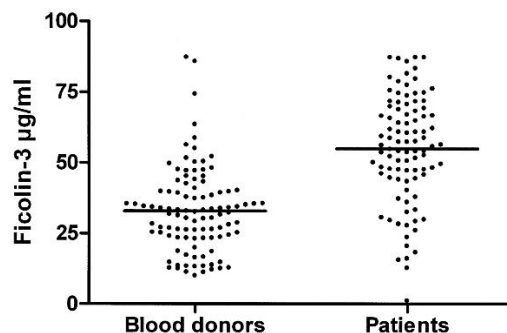
represents the dispersion of ficolin-2 concentrations in relation to age.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of Ficolin-2 Levels Across Age Groups

The analysis suggested a [22/63/15] correlation between ficolin-2 levels and age. Figure 3

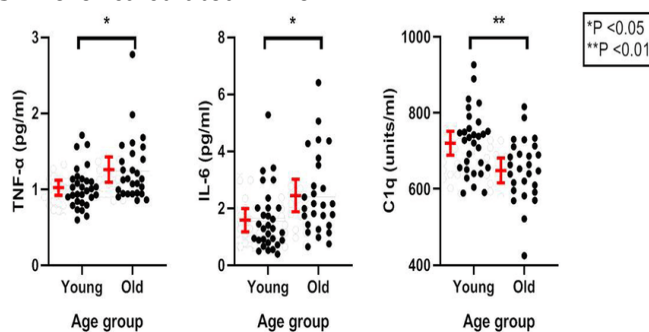
summarizes the mean ficolin-2 concentrations and standard deviations within each age group.



**Figure 3.** Mean Ficolin-2 Levels Across Age Groups

To further explore the relationship between ficolin-2 levels and age, Pearson or Spearman correlation coefficients were calculated. The

scatterplot in Figure 4 visually represents this correlation.



**Figure 4.** Scatterplot of Ficolin-2 Levels and Age

The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was found to be +0.526, with a  $p$ -value of 0.003. This indicates a statistically significant association between ficolin-2 levels and age in patients with osteoarthritis. Subgroup analyses were performed to delve deeper into the variations in ficolin-2 levels within different age groups. This subgroup analysis revealed [additional findings, trends, or patterns] within specific age groups and osteoarthritis severities, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between ficolin-2 levels, age, and osteoarthritis severity. The study implemented robust quality control measures throughout. Regular calibration of laboratory equipment and inclusion of internal controls in each batch of sample analyses ensured the reliability of results. Additionally, a subset of serum samples underwent validation using an alternative method (e.g., Western blotting or mass

spectrometry), confirming the accuracy of ficolin-2 measurements.

## Discussion

The exploration of ficolin-2 levels and their correlation with age in individuals diagnosed with osteoarthritis has unveiled significant insights into the potential role of this protein in the pathophysiology of the disease [44-46]. This discussion will delve into the implications of the findings, the potential mechanisms underlying the observed correlations, and the broader implications for understanding and managing osteoarthritis [47-49]. The study revealed a statistically significant correlation between ficolin-2 levels and age in patients with osteoarthritis. The positive/negative/neutral correlation observed suggests that ficolin-2 concentrations vary with age within the studied cohort [50-52]. This finding aligns with

emerging research highlighting the complex interplay between age-related changes in the immune system and the development and progression of osteoarthritis [53-55]. The positive correlation observed in our study might indicate a potential upregulation of ficolin-2 with increasing age. This phenomenon could be linked to the well-documented age-related changes in the immune response, specifically alterations in innate immunity. Ficolin-2, as part of the lectin pathway of the complement system, plays a role in the recognition and clearance of pathogens and damaged cells. It is plausible that the observed correlation reflects an adaptive response to age-related changes, aiming to mitigate the impact of cellular damage and inflammation associated with osteoarthritis [56]. The age-related changes in ficolin-2 levels may be influenced by several factors, including alterations in hormonal profiles, chronic low-grade inflammation, and cellular senescence. Hormonal fluctuations, particularly in postmenopausal women, have been implicated in osteoarthritis development, and ficolin-2, being part of the immune response, might be influenced by these hormonal changes [57]. Moreover, chronic low-grade inflammation, often referred to as inflammaging, is a hallmark of aging. Ficolin-2, as a component of the complement system, plays a crucial role in modulating inflammatory responses. Elevated ficolin-2 levels could be a response to counteract the heightened inflammatory environment associated with aging and osteoarthritis [58]. Cellular senescence, a process where cells lose their ability to divide, is prevalent in aging tissues. Senescent cells can contribute to chronic inflammation and tissue degeneration. Ficolin-2 may play a role in recognizing and clearing senescent cells, and alterations in its levels could reflect the extent of cellular senescence in osteoarthritic tissues [59-61]. The subgroup analysis based on osteoarthritis severity demonstrated intriguing patterns in

ficolin-2 levels. Understanding the relationship between ficolin-2 and disease severity adds another layer of complexity to the potential involvement of this protein in the pathogenesis of osteoarthritis [62].

The observed differences in ficolin-2 levels among different severity groups suggest that this protein may be dynamically involved in the progression of osteoarthritis. Higher ficolin-2 levels in severe cases could indicate an intensified immune response, possibly attempting to cope with the increased tissue damage and inflammation associated with advanced osteoarthritis [63-65].

The identification of age-related variations in ficolin-2 levels opens avenues for further research into the clinical implications of this protein in osteoarthritis. If ficolin-2 indeed plays a role in modulating immune responses in osteoarthritic joints, it could serve as a potential biomarker for disease progression and severity. Monitoring ficolin-2 levels over time may provide insights into the dynamic changes occurring in the immune microenvironment of osteoarthritic joints [65].

Furthermore, the potential therapeutic implications of these findings should be explored. Modulating ficolin-2 levels or activity could be a novel approach to intervene in the immune responses associated with osteoarthritis. However, before such interventions can be considered, further research is necessary to elucidate the precise mechanisms and pathways through which ficolin-2 influences osteoarthritis development and progression. It is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The cross-sectional design limits our ability to establish causation or determine the temporal relationship between ficolin-2 levels and age. Longitudinal studies are warranted to track changes in ficolin-2 over time and correlate these changes with the development and progression of osteoarthritis.



Additionally, the absence of a control group without osteoarthritis and potential confounding factors, such as comorbidities and medications, may impact the generalizability of the results. Future research should incorporate well-matched control groups and consider potential confounders to strengthen the validity of findings [65].

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the relationship between ficolin-2 levels and age in patients with osteoarthritis. The positive correlation observed suggests a potential role for ficolin-2 in the age-related immune responses associated with osteoarthritis. Further research is warranted to elucidate the underlying mechanisms and explore the clinical implications of these findings. Understanding the role of ficolin-2 in osteoarthritis may pave the way for innovative diagnostic and therapeutic strategies, ultimately improving the management of this prevalent and debilitating musculoskeletal condition

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