EFFECT OF A20 ON GLUCOSE DEPENDENT CELL MIGRATION IN ACUTE LYMPHOBLASTIC LEUKEMIA

Nguyen Thi Xuan1,2,*, Dang Thanh Chung3, Can Van Mao3

1Institute of Genome Research, Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology
2Graduate University of Science and Technology, Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology
3Vietnam Military Medical University

*To whom correspondence should be addressed. E-mail: xuannt@igr.ac.vn

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SUMMARY

Acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) is the most common pediatric hematologic malignancy characterized by aberrant proliferation of immature lymphoid cells. A20 is a deubiquitinase gene that inhibits functional activation of immune cells mediated through nuclear factor κB (NFκB)-signal transducers and activators of transcription (STAT) pathways. A20 is frequently inactivated in leukemia/lymphoma. Little is known about the involvement between A20 and STAT signalling in regulating the function of ALL blasts. The present study, therefore, explored whether migration and apoptosis of peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) and ALL blasts in high glucose conditions is regulated by A20. To this end, ALL blasts from blood samples of fifteen patients and PBMCs from healthy individuals in the absence of A20 were examined. Gene expression profile was determined by quantitative RT-PCR, cell apoptosis by flow cytometry, and cell migration by a transwell migration assay. As a result, the expression of A20 was inactivated in ALL blasts. Cell migration, but not apoptosis of ALL blasts was enhanced when the cells were exposed to high glucose and dependent on A20 expression, the effects were abolished by using Nifuroxazide, a STAT inhibitor. In conclusion, A20 inhibited glucose-induced migration of ALL blasts through the STAT pathway. The effect might contribute to poorer survival of ALL patients, who develop hyperglycemia during therapy.

Keywords: Acute lymphoblastic leukemia, A20, apoptosis, migration, PBMCs.

INTRODUCTION

Acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) is the most common pediatric hematologic malignancy defined by clonal expansion of lymphocytic population with arrested maturation in the blood and bone marrow (Chen et al., 2007; Troeger et al., 2008). Despite notable improvements in the long-term survival rate, about 10% to 15% of patients develop the relapsed ALL due to drug resistance or toxicity (Uderzo et al., 2001). ALL blast cells are characterized by hyper-activation of intracellular signalling pathways including signal transducers and activators of transcription (STATs) (Furqan et al., 2013; Irving, 2016; Tovar et al., 2016) that regulate cellular physiological processes such as growth, migration, and cell survival. Therefore, the STAT inhibitor Nifuroxazide is used to exert anti-tumor immunity and anti-metastasis activity in multiple cancers including ALL (Zhu et al., 2016; Ye et al., 2017).

ALL treatment induces metabolic abnormalities, such as impaired glucose tolerance and diabetes (Barbosa-Cortes et al., 2017). Hyperglycemia is common with ALL
therapy within the first phase of chemotherapy (Tsai et al., 2015) and the patients with hyperglycemia are associated with risk of infection and poorer survival (Dare et al., 2013). Glucose is an energy-rich molecule and cells use glucose to generate ATP through glycolysis and oxidative phosphorylation. In contrast to normal cells, cancer cells exhibit elevated levels of glucose consumption and produce excessive lactic acid by glycolysis even in aerobic conditions (Warburg, 1956). Therefore, a glucose starvation medium inhibits cancer cell growth and viability through activated AMPK pathway and inactivated mTOR signalling (El Mjiyad et al., 2011).

Abnormal activation of functional genes involved in the development and pathogenesis of cancers have been extensively indicated in multiple studies. A recent study indicated that inactivated expression of A20 results from genetic aberrations including gene deletions and/or mutations linked to hematologic malignancies (Kato et al., 2009). A20 is considered as a negative regulator of the inflammatory response and cell migration mediated through activation of nuclear factor (NF)-κB signalling (Kato et al., 2009). A20-deficient mice display severe inflammation, cachexia and premature mortality (Lee et al., 2000).

Although A20 loss has been identified in many cancers, little is known regarding its role in the regulation of migration and apoptosis of leukemic blasts in high glucose conditions. The present study has thus been performed to elucidate whether A20 participates in modulating the physiological processes of leukemic cells. To this end, A20 gene expression, migration, and apoptosis of ALL blasts and A20-silenced PBMCs were investigated.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Patients and control subjects

Fresh peripheral blood samples were collected from untreated 15 patients aged from 20–45 years, who were diagnosed with ALL based on cytomorphology and cytochemistry according to the WHO (Harris et al., 2000) classification, at the 103 Hospital, Military Medical University, Hanoi, Vietnam. The control group comprised 16 healthy subjects. No individuals in the control population took any medication or suffered from any known acute or chronic disease. All patients and volunteers gave a written consent to participate in the study. Person care and experimental procedures were performed according to the Vietnamese law for the welfare of humans and were approved by the Ethical Committee of Institute of Genome Research, Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology.

Isolation of peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) and leukemic blasts

PBMCs from whole blood samples of healthy donors and leukemic cells from ALL patients were collected by venipuncture and transferred to sterile tubes containing EDTA as an anticoagulant. The cells were isolated via density gradient centrifugation (Ficoll-Paque Plus, GE Healthcare Life Sciences) using Hank's buffer (Gibco). Freshly isolated PBMCs and leukemic cells were obtained by centrifuging at 400 g for 30 min at room temperature. The cells were counted in a Neubauer chamber and washed with PBS, the final cell pellet was resuspended in RPMI 1640 medium (Gibco) with 10% FBS, L-glutamine (Gibco), Antibiotic-Antimycotic Solution (Sigma), and MEM NEAA (Gibco) at a density of 2×10⁶ cells/ml and cultured for 48 h. The cells were treated with Escherichia coli lipopolysaccharide, which is used as a positive control for physiological activation of PBMCs (LPS, 500 ng/ml, Sigma-Aldrich) or high glucose (30 mM, Sigma Aldrich) in the presence or absence of Nifuroxazide (10 µM, Sigma-Aldrich).

Transfection of PBMCs with siRNA

Human A20-targeted and control siRNAs (pre-designed siRNA, Thermo Scientific) were
transfected into PBMCs (2 x 10^6 cells/ml) with the help of Lipofectamine RNAiMAX Reagent (Invitrogen) according to the manufacturer’s recommendations. Cells were incubated for 24 h at 37°C, 5% CO₂. After washing three times with PBS, the cells were used for further experiments.

RNA extraction and real-time RT-PCR

Total mRNA was isolated using the Qiashredder and RNeasy Mini Kit from Qiagen according to the manufacturer’s instructions. For cDNA first-strand synthesis, 1 µg of total RNA in 12.5 µL DEPC-H₂O was mixed with 1 µL of oligo-dT primer (500 µg/mL, Invitrogen) and heated for 2 min at 70°C. To determine the transcript level of A20, the quantitative real-time PCR with the LightCycler System (Roche Diagnostics) was applied. The following primers were used: A20 primers: 5’-TCCTCAGGCTTTGTATTTGA-3’ (forward) and 5’-TGTGTATCGGTGCATGGTTTT-3’ (reverse) and GAPDH primers: 5’-GGAGCGAGATCCCTCCAAA-3’ (forward) and 5’-GGCTGTTGTCATACTTCTCAT-3’ (reverse). PCR reactions were performed in a final volume of 20 µL containing 2 µL cDNA, 2.4 µL MgCl₂ (3 mM), 1 µL primer mix (0.5 µM of both primers), 2 µL cDNA Master SYBR Green I mix (Roche Molecular Biochemicals), and 12.6 µL DEPC-treated water. The target DNA was amplified during 40 cycles of 95°C for 10 s, 62°C for 10 s, and 72°C for 16 s, each with a temperature transition rate of 20°C/s, a secondary target temperature of 50°C, and a step size of 0.5°C. Melting curve analysis was performed at 95°C, 0 s; 60°C, 10 s; 95°C, 0 s to determine the melting temperature of primer dimers and the specific PCR products. The ratio between the respective gene and corresponding GAPDH was calculated per sample according to the ∆∆ cycle threshold method.

Migration assay

PBMCs and ALL blasts were washed twice with PBS and suspended in RPMI 1640 medium. Migration was assessed in triplicate in a multiwell chamber with a pore diameter size of 3 µm (BD Falcon). The cell suspension (2 x 10^6 cells/ml) was placed in the upper chamber to migrate into the lower chamber in which either CXCL12 (200 ng/ml, PeproTech) or medium alone as a control for spontaneous migration were included. The chamber was placed in a 5% CO₂, 37°C incubator for 24 h. The cells that migrated into the lower chamber were collected and counted under a light microscope using Trypan blue. The mean number of spontaneously migrated cells were subtracted from the total number of migrated cell and migration was considered by calculating the percentage of migrating cell related to the input.

Caspase 3 activity assay

Caspase 3 activity was determined using the caspase-3 activity assay kit from Biovision according to the manufacturer’s instructions. Briefly, 5x10⁶ cells were washed twice with cold PBS, fixed and permeabilized with ‘Cytofix/Cytoperm’ solution, and then by washing twice with ‘Perm/ Wash’ buffer. Then the cells were stained with FITC conjugated anti-active caspase 3 antibody in ‘Perm/ Wash’ buffer for 60 min. After 2 washing steps, the cells were analyzed by flow cytometry. The caspase 3-positive cells were considered as apoptotic cells.

Phosphatidylserine translocation

Apoptotic cell membrane scrambling was evidenced from annexin V binding to phosphatidylserine (PS) at the cell surface. The percentage of PS-translocating cells was evaluated by staining with FITC-conjugated Annexin V. In brief, 2 x10⁶ cells were harvested and washed twice with annexin washing buffer (AWB, 10 mM Hepes/NaOH, pH 7.4, 140 mM NaCl, 5 mM CaCl₂). The cell pellet was resuspended in 100 µL of annexin-V-Fluos labelling solution (Roche) (20µl Annexin-V-Fluos labelling reagent in 1 ml AWB), incubated for 15 min at room temperature. After washing with AWB, they were analyzed by flow cytometry.
Statistics

Data are provided as means ± SEM, n represents the number of independent experiments. Differences were tested for significance using Student’s unpaired two-tailed t-test or ANOVA, as appropriate. P<0.05 was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Attenuated expression of A20 is reported in several lymphomas (Kato et al., 2009). Firstly, we conducted experiments to ask whether the level of A20 is down-regulated in ALL patients. As expected, inactivation of A20 was observed in ALL patients (Figure 1). Moreover, A20 is considered as an inhibitor of migration through STAT signaling (Kato et al., 2009), therefore, we performed transfection experiments using control or A20 siRNA to block A20 expression and Nifuroxazide to inhibit expression of STAT activation. As shown in Figure 2, LPS treatment leads to increased migration of PBMCs and A20-silenced PBMCs in a greater number compared to control siRNA-treated PBMCs and the effect was abolished in the presence of Nifuroxazide. The evidence suggested that A20 sensitive migration in PBMCs was dependent on STAT signalling.

Unlikely to PBMCs, LPS did not induce migration of ALL blast (data not shown). Cancer cells including leukemic blasts use glucose to produce a severely elevated level of lactic acid by switching the oxidative pathway to the glycolytic pathway even in the presence of oxygen, whereas in normal cells glucose generates lactate in anaerobic conditions (Warburg, 1956). Accumulation of lactic acid is associated with poor prognosis of ALL (Sayyed et al., 2018), and hyperglycemia is found in about 10% ALL patients during chemotherapy treatment, who are associated with risk of infection and poorer survival (Panigrahi et al., 2016). In this study, we used high glucose to stimulate this activation in the blasts. Treatment of high glucose significantly increased migration of the blasts compared to that of PBMCs and the difference was attenuated by using Nifuroxazide (Figure 3), although migration of the blasts in normal glucose condition was not different with PBMCs. The evidence revealed for the first time that in the exposure of high glucose, migration of blast cells in ALL patients was significantly increased and dependent on the presence of A20 through STAT signalling. It has been shown that glucose starvation results in cancer cell...
growth and viability through several different mechanisms, including cell death by activating the AMPK pathway and inactivating mTOR signalling (El Mjiyad et al., 2011). A loss of A20 protein is also frequently found in several cell types upon high glucose treatment (Shrikhande et al., 2010). Although, recent studies also reported the role of A20 as an inhibitor of migration of cancer cells (Kato et al., 2009), and signalling molecules including STATs (Furqan et al., 2013) are linked to cancer cell migration, the A20 sensitive regulation of migration of ALL blasts through STAT pathway is undefined.

Figure 3. Effect of high glucose on the migration of ALL blasts. Arithmetic means ± SEM (n = 5) of percentages of migrated PBMCs (white bars) and ALL blasts (black bars), which were untreated or treated with LPS (500ng/ml) in the presence or absence of high glucose (30 mM) and/or Nifuroxazide (10µM). * (p<0.05) indicates a significant difference from high glucose-treated ALL blasts (ANOVA).

Figure 4. Effect of high glucose on apoptosis of PBMCs. A-B. The arithmetic mean ±SEM (n=5) of percentages of caspase 3+ and annexin V+ expressing PBMCs, which were treated with control siRNA or A20 siRNA in the presence or absence of high glucose (30 mM) and/or Nifuroxazide (10µM). * (p<0.05) and *** (p<0.001) indicate significant differences from control PBMCs (ANOVA).
Figure 5. Effect of high glucose on apoptosis of ALL blasts. A. Representative FACS histograms depicting caspase 3 activity and annexin V binding were attained from PBMCs and ALL blasts, which were untreated or treated with high glucose (30 mM). B-C. Arithmetic means ± SEM (n=5) of caspase 3 activity and annexin V binding were attained from PBMCs (white bars) and ALL blasts (black bars), which were untreated or treated with high glucose (30 mM). ** (p<0.01) and *** (p<0.001) indicates significant differences from control PBMCs (ANOVA).

Activation of immune cells leads to cell apoptosis; therefore, further experiments were performed to ask whether induction of cell apoptosis by high glucose is related to the expression of A20 and STAT signaling. PBMCs were transfected with control or A20 siRNA and subsequently treated with high glucose for 24 h. Differently, the effect of high glucose on caspase 3 activity and annexin V binding of PBMCs was independent on the expression level of A20 and STAT signaling (Figure 4) as caspase 3 activity and annexin V binding of PBMCs were enhanced upon high glucose treatment and unaltered in the presence of Nifuroxazide in both genotypes.

In contrast to control PBMCs, high glucose did not affect cell apoptosis of leukemic blasts (Figure 5). The results attained pointed out that the inhibitory effect of apoptosis in high glucose-induced blast cells was independent on the presence of A20. Conversely, another study indicated that glucose deficit medium exerts apoptosis of cancer cells (El Mjiyad et al., 2011). Therefore, the regulation of cell apoptosis in ALL patients might be mediated through other signaling pathways rather than STATs.

In conclusion, A20 participates in inhibiting ALL cell migration through STAT signaling in high glucose exposure. The effect might contribute to poorer prognosis and survival of ALL patients, who develop hyperglycemia during therapy.

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A20 ĐIỀU HÒA SỰ DI CƯ PHỤ THUỘC VÀO ĐƯỜNG GLUCOSE CỦA TẾ BÀO LEUKEMIA CẤP ĐỘNG LYMPHO

Nguyễn Thị Xuân¹², Đặng Thành Chung³, Cấn Văn Mão³

¹Viện Nghiên cứu Hé gen, Viện Hàn lâm Khoa học và Công nghệ Việt Nam
²Học viện Khoa học và Công nghệ, Viện Hàn lâm Khoa học và Công nghệ Việt Nam
³Học viện Quân Y, Hà Đông, Hà Nội

TÓM TẮT


Từ khóa: A20, apoptosis, bạch cầu lympho cấp, sự di cư và tế bào đơn nhân máu ngoại vi.