

Evaluating the Expression of Angiogenic Mediators in a Mouse Model of Tumor Metastasis

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ABSTRACT

Solid tumors typically require angiogenesis, the development of new blood vessels, for growth and metastasis. Vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) induces angiogenesis by activating receptors on host endothelial cells. One such receptor, Flt-1, occurs as either a membrane bound or a secreted form (sFlt-1) that can inhibit angiogenic signaling. Previous studies have shown that variation in mRNA expression of VEGF and its receptors KDR, sFlt-1 and Flt-1 occurs in pathological angiogenesis, *i.e.* metastatic tumorigenesis. We hypothesize that the ratio of sFlt-1:Flt-1 mRNA will be altered in the presence of solid tumors. The objective of this study was to evaluate the expression of sFlt-1 and Flt-1 mRNAs in a mouse metastatic tumor model using CT26.CL25 cells. CT26.CL25 cells are VEGF-producing murine colon carcinoma cells transfected with the lacZ gene, which expresses β -galactosidase activity. These cells, injected intravenously, form tumor nodules in the lung. A pilot study revealed development of lung nodules in mice nine days after intravenous injection with 10^5 cells. In a second study, twenty-five 10-week-old female Balb/c mice were injected intravenously, via tail vein, with 2×10^5 cells, and fifteen with vehicle control. Lung nodules developed in all mice injected with cells. Tissues were harvested by routine necropsy and either formalin-fixed for routine histology/histochemistry or stored for quantitative RT-PCR (QPCR) analysis of gene expression. Under microscopic evaluation, sections of lungs stained with Hematoxylin & Eosin (H&E) revealed nodules composed of polygonal neoplastic cells. cDNA from lungs (14 tumor-bearing, 10 controls) and cultured CT26.CL25 cells was analyzed by QPCR using primers and TaqMan probes directed against sFlt-1, Flt-1, KDR, VEGF_A, PlGF (Placental Growth Factor), Angiotensin Converting Enzyme (ACE), 18S ribosomal RNA and neo^R (neomycin phosphotransferase). We observed an increased sFlt-1:Flt-1 ratio in tumor-bearing versus control lungs, suggesting that tumor-derived signals may influence sFlt-1 and Flt-1 expression differentially. Additionally, there was increased expression of Flt-1, sFlt-1 and KDR in tumors versus controls, but not in VEGF expression in tumors versus controls. Interestingly, expression of PlGF was increased in tumors versus controls, suggesting its role as an enhancer of tumor progression in the presence of other angiogenic factors. Together, these findings indicate that solid tumor angiogenesis results from an intricate balance of various angiogenic factors.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work and all that comes from it first of all to God, who has given me the strength to make it through what has been the most challenging, yet rewarding time of my life. Also to my husband, Earl, and my son, Josiah, without their support, sacrifice and love I would not have been able to fully reach my potential as a wife, mother, and student. And lastly, but definitely not least, to my mother, Doris Durrett, who has given me immeasurable love, support, encouragement and purpose. Thank you Mom! I love each of you more than you could imagine and appreciate you allowing me to be me and pursue my goals.

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Go HOKIES!!!!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
ANGIOGENESIS.....	4
VASCULAR ENDOTHELIAL GROWTH FACTOR (VEGF).....	4
VEGF _A	5
PlGF and VEGF _B	5
VEGF _C and VEGF _D	5
VEGF RECEPTORS.....	6
Flt-1.....	6
KDR.....	7
sFlt-1.....	7
ANGIOGENESIS AND SOLID TUMORS.....	9
VEGF.....	9
PlGF.....	11
Hypoxia-inducible factor (HIF).....	13
Other Contributors.....	13
ANGIOGENESIS and THE BIOLOGY OF METASTASIS.....	14
ANGIOGENESIS AND LUNG TUMORS.....	14
MOUSE MODELS.....	17
Angiogenesis.....	17
Metastasis.....	18
Lung Cancer.....	19
THERAPEUTICS.....	20
Targeting VEGF.....	20
Targeting VEGF receptors.....	21
Targeting Tumor Vessels.....	21
Other Strategies.....	21
MATERIALS AND METHODS.....	23
PART I. CELL CULTURE AND ANALYSIS OF CELL CHARACTERISTICS.....	23
Cell Culture.....	23
β -galactosidase expression.....	23
VEGF ELISA.....	23
PART II. IMPLEMENTATION OF MOUSE METASTASIS MODEL.....	24
Pilot Study.....	24
<i>Harvesting Lung Tumors</i>	24
<i>Establishment of Tumor Burden</i>	24
<i>Tissue β-galactosidase Activity</i>	24
<i>Histopathology</i>	25
Primary Study.....	25
<i>Tumor Development</i>	25
<i>Harvesting Lung Tumors</i>	25
<i>Establishment of Tumor Burden</i>	26
<i>β-galactosidase Activity</i>	26
<i>Histopathology and Immunohistochemistry</i>	26
<i>Computed Tomography</i>	28
PART III. ANALYZING THE EXPRESSION OF VEGF RECEPTORS, FLT-1 AND sFLT-1.....	28
RNA isolation.....	28

cDNA synthesis.....	29
Quantitative Real Time PCR (QPCR).....	30
RESULTS.....	32
CELL CULTURE CHARACTERISTICS.....	32
In Situ β -galactosidase Activity Stain.....	32
VEGF ELISA.....	32
MOUSE METASTASIS MODEL.....	33
Pilot Study.....	33
β -galactosidase Activity Stain.....	33
Gross and Histopathologic Findings.....	33
Primary Study.....	36
Gross and Histopathologic Findings.....	37
β -galactosidase Activity Tissue Stain.....	38
ANALYSIS OF mRNA EXPRESSION.....	39
cDNA Screening PCR.....	39
QPCR.....	40
DISCUSSION.....	46
Future Studies.....	50
REFERENCES.....	51
APPENDIX 1: Materials.....	64

FIGURES AND TABLES

1. Vascular endothelial growth factor and its receptors.....	6
2. Flt-1 protein, mRNA and genomic structures.....	8
3. Tumor cells produce VEGF and PlGF.....	10
4. The dual role of PlGF in pathologic angiogenesis	12
5. Tissue harvesting and procedures.....	26
6. β -galactosidase In Situ Stain	32
7. Pilot study: Mouse weights.....	33
8. Pilot Study, Day 9 tumor-bearing lung.	34
9. Pilot Study, Day 14 tumor-bearing lungs.....	35
10. Pilot Study, Day 16 tumor-bearing lungs	35
11. Primary Study, tumor-bearing and control lungs	38
12. β -galactosidase Activity Tissue Stain.....	38
13. PCR Gel: Flt-1	39
14. QPCR: Δ Ct (sFlt-Flt) tumor-bearing versus control lung.....	40
15. QPCR: Δ Ct (neo ^R – ACE) versus lung weight.....	41
16. QPCR: Expression of sFlt-1, Flt-1, KDR and PlGF.....	42
17. QPCR: Δ Ct (PlGF – ACE) versus lung weight.....	43
18. QPCR: Expression of PlGF.....	44
Table 1. Primer and Probe Sequences.....	31
Table 2. Primary study: Mouse weights.....	36