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The effect of hyaluronic acid on insulin secretion in HIT-T15 cells through the enhancement of gap-junctional intercellular communications

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Abstract

The transplantation of bioartificial pancreas has the potential to restore endogenous insulin secretion in type I diabetes. The bioartificial pancreas is constructed in vitro from cells and a support matrix. Hyaluronic acid (HA) is an extremely ubiquitous polysaccharide of extracellular matrix in the body and plays various biological roles. It has been suggested that high molecular weight (HMW) HA increases in the function of gap-junctional intercellular communications (GJIC) and the expression of connexin-43 (Cx43). To determine whether the function of pancreatic β-cells is affected by gap junctions after HMW HA-treatment, we exposed HIT-T15, a clonal pancreatic β-cell line, in various concentrations of HA for 24 h, and then detected the insulin secretion and content, using an insulin assay kit by ELISA technique. The cellular functions of GJIC were assayed by dye-transfer method using the dye solution of Lucifer yellow. HA-treatment resulted in the enhancement of GJIC function, the increase of insulin release and insulin content. The results obtained in this study suggest that HA-coating increases the insulin secretion of HIT-T15 cells by the enhancement of Cx43-mediated GJIC. The results give useful information on design biocompatibility of HA when is used as a biomaterial for bioartificial pancreas.

Keywords: Hyaluronic acid; Gap-junctional intercellular communications; HIT-T15 cells; Insulin; Bioartificial pancreas

1. Introduction

Type I diabetes is caused by the autoimmune destruction of the β-cells. All patients with type I diabetes require daily insulin shots for the control of glucose levels. However, the insulin therapy cannot inhibit the development of serious chronic complications. The pancreas transplantation has been expected to be the most promising approach toward treating diabetes. The bioartificial pancreas is constructed in vitro from insulin-secreting cells or islets and a support matrix by a tissue engineering method. The frequently used matrix materials are alginate and agar [1,2]. Although bioartificial pancreatic constructs contain insulin-secreting cells entrapped in agar or alginate matrix implanted into the peritoneal cavity of the diabetic patient, mice, and dog, can restore normoglycemia and markedly abate diabetic symptoms, there are important questions in the structural integrity of support matrix, metabolic activity and viability of cells or islets, and late vascular thrombosis [1,2]. Therefore, the new matrix biomaterials, which mimic the functions of extracellular matrix (ECM), need to be researched.

Hyaluronic acid (HA) is an extremely ubiquitous member of the nonsulfated glycosaminoglycan ECM molecule family and is thought to play various biological roles particularly in growth, adhesion, proliferation, differentiation, and cell migration [3,4]. More importantly, the receptor for HA-mediated motility regulates gap-junction

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channel and connexin-43 (Cx43) expression by its actions on focal adhesions and the associated cytoskeleton [5]. In addition, Park and Tsuchiya [6] have reported that high molecular weight (HMW) HA-coating can enhance the function of gap-junctional intercellular communications (GJIC). The insulin secretion from pancreatic β-cells is a multicellular event depending on their interaction with neurotransmitters and numerous signal molecules carried by blood and also direct interactions between cell–cell and cell–matrix contacts by gap-junctional channels, which mediate exchanges of molecules smaller than 1000 Da, such as ions, small metabolites, and second messengers between adjacent cells. The latter interactions are thought to be crucial regulatory mechanisms of insulin secretion [7–9], and the pharmacological blockade of GJIC markedly decreases insulin release [8]. However, the effects of HMW HA as biomaterials of support matrix on functions of pancreatic β-cells and gap-junctional channel remain unclear.

In the present study, we investigated the effects of HMW HA on the function of GJIC, the expression of Cx43, insulin content, and insulin secretion using HIT-T15 cells in vitro. These results suggest that HMW HA can be used as the biomaterial for the development of a bioartificial pancreas: design biocompatibility of HA depends on the molecular-weight size of HA, and its application method and concentration.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Materials

Lucifer yellow was purchased from Molecular Probes (Eugene, OR). HA (1680 kDa) and TetraColor ONE (WST-8) were supplied by Seikagaku Industries, Ltd. (Tokyo, Japan). ELISA insulin assay kit was obtained from Morinaga Seikagaku Co. (Yokohama, Japan). Bovine serum albumin (BSA) was obtained from Roche Diagnostics GmbH (Mannheim, Germany). Krebs–Ringer bicarbonate (KRB) buffer (pH 7.4), fetal bovine serum (FBS), and anti-Cx43 were purchased from Sigma Chemical Co. (St. Louis, MO). β-actin antibody was obtained from Cell Signaling Technology Inc. (Tokyo, Japan). Roswell Park Memorial Institute (RPMI) 1640 medium was from Nissui pharmaceutical Co. (Tokyo, Japan). All other chemicals used were obtained from Wako Pure Chemical Industries (Osaka, Japan).

2.2. Preparation of media and culture dishes

The HA polysaccharide was dissolved in distilled water at a concentration of 4 mg/ml. Each of the 35-mm culture dish (Falcon 1008, Becton Dickinson) was coated at a final concentration of 0.01, 0.05, 0.1, 0.5, and 1.0 mg/ml. The HA-coated dishes were dried further under sterile air flow at room temperature for 12 h before use. In order to investigate the effect of HA-addition on the functions of HIT-T15 cells, different media were prepared at a final concentration of 0.01, 0.05, 0.1, 0.5, and 1.0 mg/ml. HA-treatment is performed to cells for 24 h.

2.3. Cells and cell culture

A hamster pancreatic β-cell line, HIT-T15 (HIT-T15 cells, Dainippon Pharmaceutical Co., Japan), was cultured in RPMI 1640 medium containing 10% FBS, 2 mM L-glutamine, 100 IU penicillin-G and 100 μg/ml streptomycin at 37 °C in a humidified atmosphere of 5% CO_2. The subculture cells were seeded at a density of $1.0–5.0 \times 10^5$ cells/ml in multiwell plates or culture dishes. When they reached more than 80% confluence, the cells were used for various studies. Throughout the cell growth period the culture media were replaced every 2 days.

2.4. Measurement of cell viability

To evaluate the affect of HMW HA on cell viability of HIT-T15 cells, HIT-T15 cells (1×10^5) were incubated into the various concentrations of HA-coated 24-well plates, or after the cells were seeded onto 24-well plates and pre-incubated in a 10% FBS/RPMI 1640 medium overnight, the medium was exchanged for 10% FBS/HA/RPMI 1640 medium prepared. After 24 h of HA-treatment, the cell viability was determined by the WST-8 reduction assay, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Control cells received fresh medium without HA.

2.5. Measurement of insulin release and insulin content

HIT-T15 cells were treated as described above. After pre-incubating for 30 min at 37 °C in KRB buffer, no glucose cells were stimulated for 60 min with 11.1 mM glucose in KRB buffer. The medium was collected, centrifuged for 5 min at 3000*g*, and the supernatant was frozen at −80 °C for insulin release assay. Cultures were then extracted for 24 h at 4 °C in acid-ethanol and the extracts also frozen for determination of insulin and protein content. Insulin was determined by ELISA insulin kit with rat insulin as standard, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Protein content was measured by the BCA protein assay reagent kit with albumin as standard (PIERCE). Values of secreted insulin were normalized to protein content.

2.6. Measurement of dye transfer

Gap junction-mediated communication between β-cells regulates the insulin secretion and insulin biosynthesis. Because HMW HA-coating increased the insulin release and insulin content but not HA-added, we tested whether the HA-coating increases the insulin secretion and insulin content have a relationship with gap junctions between HIT-T15 cells. HIT-T15 (5×10^5) cells were exposed to the HA-coated (0.1, 0.25, and 0.5 mg/dish) 35-mm glass coverslip (Ashland, MA) and incubated for 24 h to evaluate dye coupling using Lucifer yellow. The cells were rinsed with phosphate-buffered saline [PBS(+)] containing Ca^{2+}/Mg^{2+}, and 3 ml of PBS(+) containing 1% BSA and 10 mM HEPES (pH 7.4) were added to keep a sufficient pH stability under the microscope. The junctional coupling of HIT-T15 cells was determined by injecting Lucifer yellow into individual cells within monolayer clusters. Injections were performed on a phase-contrast microscope with InjectMan NI2 and microinjector FemtoJet (Eppendorf AG, Germany) using glass micropipette that were filled with a 4% solution of Lucifer yellow CH (MW 457.2) dissolved in 0.33 M lithium chloride, as previously described [11]. An injection pressure of 6.5 psi for 200 ms was used for each injection. The coupling extent was evaluated by counting dye-transferred cells at 2 min after microinjection. There was no leakage of injected dye into the medium.

2.7. Western blot analysis

HIT-T15 cells were grown into the various concentration of HA-coated 100-mm plastic dishes (0.1, 0.25, and 0.5 mg/dish) (FALCON 3003; Falcon) for 24 h, rinsed with Ca^{2+}/Mg^{2+}-free PBS(−) and then lysed in CelLytic™-M lysis/extraction reagent (Sigma). Protein content was measured by the BCA protein assay reagent kit (PIERCE). Samples of total extracts (20 μg protein/lane) were fractionated by eletrophoresis in a 10% sodium dodecyl sulfate polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS–PAGE). The contents of the gels were transferred to PVDF membranes (Clear Blot Membrane-P). Membranes were saturated for 2 h at room temperature in Block Ace (Dainippon Pharmaceutical Co.,