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14-3-3η inhibits chondrogenic differentiation of ATDC5 cell

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ABSTRACT

It was previously shown that 14-3-3η is overexpressed in the synovial fluid of patients with joint inflammation, which is often associated with growth failure. In this study, we investigated the role of 14-3-3η in chondrogenesis using ATDC5 cells. Upon treatment with TNF-α, cells overexpressed 14-3-3η with inhibition of chondrogenesis. Chondrogenesis was also inhibited by overexpression of 14-3-3η without TNF-α treatment, whereas silencing of 14-3-3η promoted chondrogenic differentiation. Further, G1 phase arrest was inhibited by overexpression of 14-3-3η. In summary, we suggest that 14-3-3η plays a regulatory role in chondrogenic differentiation.

1. Introduction

The 14-3-3 proteins are a family of regulatory molecules and are found in all eukaryotes. So far, seven isoforms (β, ε, ζ, η, θ, γ and σ) have been confirmed in mammals [1,2]. Distinct isoforms of 14-3-3 proteins have been reported to play essential roles in regulating cell differentiation, proliferation and transformation, and also interact with over 200 target proteins related to signal transduction, cell cycle control, cell growth, survival, and apoptosis [3,4]. Interestingly, despite high sequence homologies and structural similarities between 14-3-3 isoforms, the pathways in which these proteins participate are considerably divergent [5]. A recent study reported that 14-3-3η and γ are found in the serum and synovial fluid of patients with joint inflammation. Especially, 14-3-3η was significantly overexpressed in juvenile rheumatoid arthritis (JRA) [6]. JRA is a chronic inflammatory disease often associated with growth impairment. Linear growth occurs by endochondral ossification of long bones. Chondrogenesis comprises proliferation, hypertrophy of growth plate chondrocytes, and synthesis of the cartilaginous matrix [7,8]. These conditions are required for expression of marker proteins related to chondrogenesis. The transcription factor Sox9 plays an essential role in the chondrogenic differentiation pathway by regulating the transcription of cartilage-specific extracellular matrix (ECM) molecules, including collagen type II and aggrecan. In early chondrogenesis, ECM proteins are highly expressed [9,10]. Some studies have reported that proinflammatory cytokines such as IL-1 and TNF-α decrease chondrocyte proliferation of the growth plate [11] and also markedly reduce Sox9 expression [12,13].

Cell cycle factors appear to play important role in the control of chondrocyte proliferation and differentiation. G1 phase arrest of the cell cycle is a prerequisite for chondrogenic differentiation [14,15]. 14-3-3 proteins regulate the cell cycle via interaction with several checkpoints [16].

So far, the role of 14-3-3η in chondrogenesis is unknown. A recent study reported that 14-3-3η selectively regulates differentiation of neurons and astrocytes. However, it is not demonstrated that 14-3-3η is affected for differentiation mechanism in neurons and astrocytes [17].

In this study we focused on the possible role of 14-3-3η in the regulation of chondrogenic differentiation using the ATDC5 cell line, which is a useful *in vitro* model for chondrogenic differentiation and allows study of ossification at the growth plate [18].

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Materials

Mouse recombinant TNF-α was obtained from R&D systems (Minnesota, USA). TNF-α antagonist was purchased from ANASPEC (San Francisco, USA). Anti-HA antibody, anti-14-3-3η antibody, anti-Sox9 antibody, anti-cyclin D1 antibody and anti-cyclin B1 antibody were purchased from Santa Cruz Bioechnology (California, USA). Anti-cyclin D3 antibody and anti-p21 antibody were obtained from BD bioscience (San Diego, USA). Anti-Collage type II antibody was purchased from Millipore (Massachusetts, USA).

2.2. Cell culture

The mouse embryonic carcinoma-derived chondrogenic cell line ATDC5 was purchased from Cell Bank, RIKEN BioResource Center (Tsukuba, Japan). ATDC5 cells were cultured in medium

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consisting of a 1:1 mixture of Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium and Ham's F-12 medium (Invitrogen) containing 5% heat-inactivated fetal bovine serum, penicillin (100 U/ml) 10 μg/ml of human transferrin (Roche Diagnostics), and 3×10^{-8} M sodium selenite (Sigma–Aldrich) at 37 °C in a 5% CO_2 humidified atmosphere. For induction of chondrogenesis, human recombinant insulin (Sigma, 10 μg/ml) was added to the medium [19].

2.3. Quantitative real-time PCR

Total RNA was isolated from ATDC5 cells using TRIzol reagent(-Sigma–Aldrich), and 1 μg of total RNA was reverse-transcribed in a final volume of 20 μl using AccuPower CycleScript RT PreMix (dT20)(Bioneer, Korea). Quanitative real-time PCR was carried out using 150 ng/well of cDNA template, the gene specific primers *Col2a1*, 5′-GAAAAACTGGTGGAGCAGCAAGAGC-3′ and 5′-CAATAAT GGGAAGGCGGGAGGTC-3′; *sox9*, 5′-AGTTACGGCATCAGCAGCAC-3′ and 5′-CAGCTGCTCCGTCTTGATGT-3′; *18s*, 5′-GTAACCCGTTGAAC C-3′ and 5′-CCATCCAATCGGTAGTAGCG-3′ and SYBR Premix Ex Taq (Takara) in a 384-well plate (Roche). The products were analyzed using a LightCycle 480 real-time PCR system (Roche). Relative gene expression was normalized to the 18s reference gene. Analysis of the data was repeated three times.

2.4. Western blot analysis

Cell lysate prepared as described previously [20] was subjected to SDS–PAGE and transferred to PVDF membrane. Immunoreactive proteins were detected by SuperSignal West Pico enhanced chemical luminescence (ECL) (Thermo Scientific).

2.5. Flow cytometry

ATDC5 cells transfected with pcDNA3.1 or HA-14-3-3η [21], were dispersed into single-cell suspensions by treatment with trypsin/EDTA. The dispersed cells were washed three times with PBS and fixed with 70% ethanol at −30 °C for 2 h. Then, the cells were incubated with 1 mg/ml of RNase A in PBS at 37 °C for 30 min and stained at room temperature for 5 min with 50 μg/ml of propidium iodide (PI) prepared in PBS. DNA content was determined by flow cytometry using a FACScalibur flow cytometer (BD bioscience), and the data were analyzed with CellQuest software (Becton Dickinson).

2.6. Alcian blue staining

Cells were cultured in 12-well plates at a density of 1.5×10^5 cells/well, followed by transfection with pcDNA3.1 or HA-14-3-3η. Chondrogenic differentiation of ATDC5 was induced by insulin treatment for 2 days. The cells were rinsed with PBS three times and then fixed with 95% methanol for 5 min at −20 °C. Cells were stained with 0.1% Alcian blue 8GX (Sigma) in 0.1 M HCl as previously described [22]. Absorbance of the extracted dye was measured using a spectrophotometer at 655 nm. Cartilage nodule formation was observed by phase contrast microcopy (Olympus CKX41) at day 2.

2.7. siRNA experiments

siRNAs targeting mouse 14-3-3η (NM_011738) (5′-CAAA-CAAGCCTTCGATGATGC TATA-3′) were purchased from Invitrogen. Stealth RNAi negative control (Invitrogen) was used as a control. Cells were transfected with siRNA using lipofectamine RNAiMAX reagent (Invitrogen) for 5 h in OPTI-MEM medium (Gibco BRL). Then, the medium was replaced with growth medium.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Inhibition of chondrogenesis by TNF-α increases 14-3-3η expression

JRA is associated with growth impairment. In mammals, growth impairment results from disordered longitudinal bone growth, which is associated with abnormal growth plate chondrogenesis [23]. A recent study reported that 14-3-3η isoform is easily detectable in the synovial fluid of patients with inflamed joints [6]. IL-1 and TNF-α are also significantly elevated in chronic inflammatory illnesses such as JRA [24].

We first examined whether or not 14-3-3η expression is increased by TNF-α, a proinflammatory cytokine, during chondrogenesis of ATDC5 cells. For this, chondrogenesis of the cells was induced by insulin, after which differentiation was determined based on the expression level of either Sox9 or Collagen type II (Fig. 1). 14-3-3η expression was increased during chondrogenesis, and it was further increased by TNF-α treatment even without insulin treatment (Fig. 1A). However, chondrogenic differentiation was inhibited by TNF-α treatment. The increased expression of 14-3-3η by TNF-α was nullified by treatment with WP9QY, a TNF-α antagonist [25]. Furthermore, chondrogenesis inhibited by TNF-α was restored by the antagonist treatment (Fig. 1B). These results indicate that TNF-α affects the expression of 14-3-3η during chondrogenic differentiation of ATDC5 cells.

3.2. Overexpression of 14-3-3η inhibits chondrogenesis of ATDC5 cells

We next evaluated the effect of 14-3-3η on the differentiation of ATDC5 cells. For this, ATDC5 cells were transfected with 14-3-3η, after which we examined the expression level of Sox9

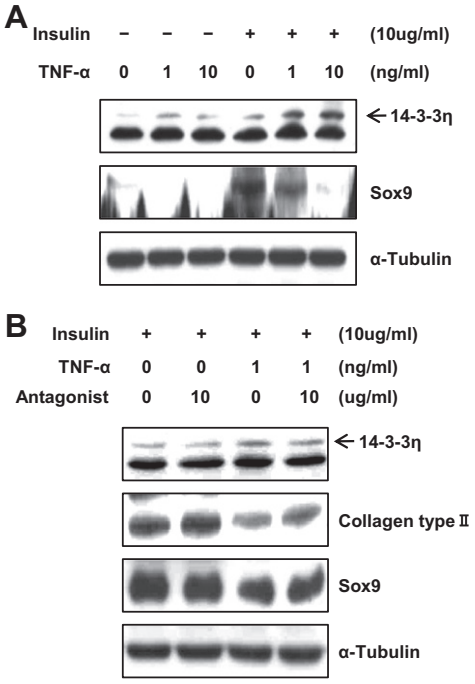

Fig. 1. Expression of 14-3-3η is increased by TNF-α during chondrogenesis. (A) ATDC5 cells were treated with different concentrations of TNF-α and cultured with or without insulin for 2 days. The expression levels of 14-3-3η and Sox9 were measured by Western blot analysis. α-Tubulin was used as a protein loading control. (B) ATDC5 cells were treated with TNF-α after pretreatment with or without the TNF-α antagonist WP9QY. Cells were then induced with insulin for 2 days, after which cell lysates were analyzed by immunoblotting with anti-14-3-3η, anti-collagen type II, anti-Sox9, or anti-α-tubulin antibodies.