

Sex as a major determinant of gene expression in tissues of mice exposed to arsenate.

Graziella Cimino-Reale¹, Barbara Casati¹, Roberta Brustio¹, Angelo Colotta¹, Raffaella Folgieri², Libero Clerici¹, and Erminio Marafante¹.

¹Physical and Chemical Exposure Unit, Institute for Health and Consumer Protection, Joint Research Centre, 21020 Ispra, Italy

²Università degli Studi di Milano, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Informazione, 20135 Milano, Italy

Introduction

Inorganic arsenic, frequently found as contaminant of ground water used for drinking purposes in many areas of the world, is a well-known potent human toxicant and carcinogen. Chronic exposure to inorganic arsenic has been associated with cancer of skin, lung, bladder and kidney and, probably, liver. The mechanism of arsenic action *in vivo* is poorly understood, in particular in relation to dose, type of tissue and gender.

To elucidate tissue- and gender dependent biological responses in the genome of mice, we have used cDNA macroarrays for investigation on the expression of 1185 cancer-related genes in mice after exposure to arsenate in drinking water.

Materials and Methods

✓ **Experimental animals:** male and female CD-1 mice.

✓ **Treatment:** Female adult mice were treated with arsenate in drinking water (1 mg As/L) for 10 days before mating and during the gestation. Separate groups of arsenic exposed males and females offspring were exposed for 2 months to 1 mg As/L of additional arsenate (As). Control male and female mice without any treatment were also analysed (Ctrl).

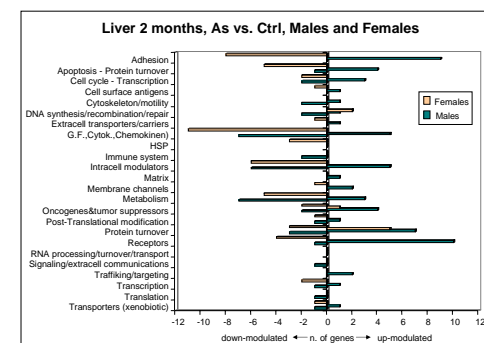
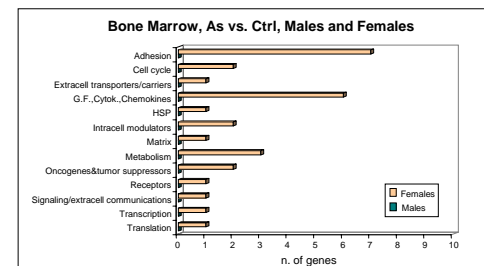
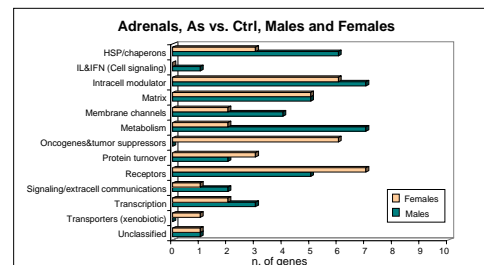
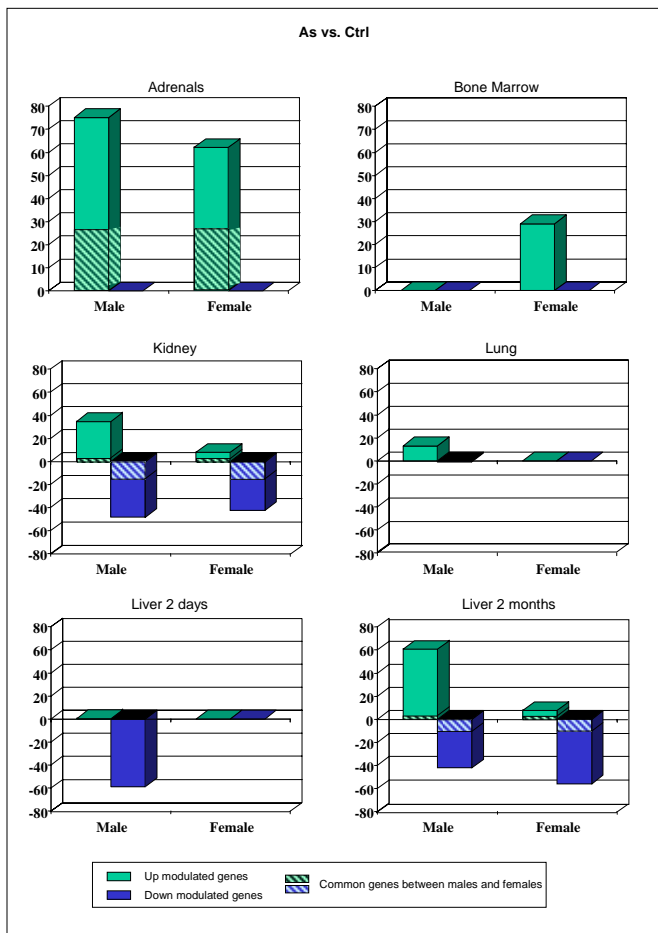
✓ **Total RNA was extracted** from tissues using RNeasy Qiagen kit and 1 µg was converted into [³²P]-labelled cDNA using Super Script III Reverse Transcriptase (Invitrogen) and ³²P-dATP (Amersham), Mouse Cancer 1.2 CDS primer mix (Atlas™, Clontech, U.S.A.).

✓ **cDNA Hybridization** on Mouse Cancer 1.2 Array (Atlas™, Clontech, U.S.A.) membranes (16 hours at 50°C).

✓ **Image Analysis:** After acquisition by Cyclone instrument (Packard Cambera Instruments, U.S.A.), the images were analyzed by Atlas Image software (Atlas™).

✓ **Data Analysis:** Significance Analysis of Microarrays (SAM).

Results



Conclusions

Continuous exposures of mice to arsenate in drinking water modulate the gene expression in tissues. Interestingly, there were remarkable sex differences: male and female mice show completely different changes in the expression of cancer-related genes.

The main gene functional families modulated, were covering a wide range of biochemical and physiological regulations, like cell cycle modulation, cell adhesion, apoptosis, xenobiotic metabolism, DNA repair, protein turnover and proto-oncogenes.

This result demonstrates important gene-environmental interactions: the molecular mechanisms triggered by arsenic levels frequently experienced following exposure via drinking water, are totally different in males and females.

The results obtained using cancer-related genes will be compared with the profiles of over 30.000 genes using the Applied Biosystems expression Array System, to clarify the sex-specific gene pathways.