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Identification and characterization of novel NF- κ B dependent genes involved in HTLV-I pathogenesis

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From 17th International Conference on Human Retroviruses: HTLV and Related Viruses
Trois Ilets, Martinique. 18-21 June 2015

The NF- κ B transcription factor plays pivotal roles in the pathogenesis and therapy-resistance of human cancers, including adult T-cell leukemia (ATL) induced by the oncoretrovirus HTLV-I. However, the downstream target genes of NF- κ B involved in cancer biology and therapy remain largely unknown. To address this important issue, we have developed a novel approach called subtraction-based complementary gene expression cloning strategy. Given the characteristic anti-apoptosis activity of cancer cells, we used this approach to identify NF- κ B-dependent anti-apoptotic genes involved in HTLV-I oncogenesis. The principle of this strategy is that expression of anti-apoptotic genes induced by HTLV-I-activated NF- κ B should protect normal T cells from apoptosis induced by death inducers such as FasL. Briefly, a subtractive cDNA retroviral library enriched in genes induced by HTLV-I-NF- κ B was generated and used to infect FasL-sensitive T cells. The infected T cells were treated with FasL and G418 (selective marker of cDNA expression). The FasL- and G418-resistant clones were isolated by limiting dilution, and the functional genes involved in FasL-resistance were fished out by RT-PCR and DNA sequencing. Using this strategy, several known NF- κ B-dependent apoptotic genes have been identified, such as IAP1, Bcl-xL, c-FLIP and DcR2, indicating the reliability of our approach. Notably, numerous novel NF- κ B-dependent anti-apoptotic genes were also identified. One of these novel genes has been confirmed to be expressed highly in HTLV-I-transformed T cells and primary ATL cells, and can be induced in normal T cells by HTLV-I in an NF- κ B-dependent manner. Our mechanistic studies further indicate that this novel protein binds to mitochondria and prevents FasL activation of Bid, Caspase 9 and

Caspase 3 but not Caspase 8. Currently, we are actively investigating the pathophysiological role of this novel gene in the biology and therapy of ATL and other cancers associated with deregulated NF- κ B.

Published: 28 August 2015

doi:10.1186/1742-4690-12-S1-P93

Cite this article as: Qu and Xiao: Identification and characterization of novel NF- κ B dependent genes involved in HTLV-I pathogenesis. *Retrovirology* 2015 **12**(Suppl 1):P93.

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