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研究課題名	Ferritin nanocaged doxorubicin for targeted hepatocellular carcinoma therapy	
研究代表者	Yan Xiyun (Institute of Biophysics, Chinese Academy of Sciences・教授)	
研究組織	受入教員	川口 寧 (東京大学医科学研究所・教授)
	分担者	Bing Jiang (School of Basic Medical Sciences, Zhengzhou University・Associate Professor)
	分担者	Bairu Zhang (Institute of Biophysics, Chinese Academy of Sciences・Senior Engineer)
	分担者	Yasushi Kawaguchi (Division of Molecular Virology・Professor)
	分担者	Hirofumi Sawa (Research Center for Zoonosis Control, Hokkaido University・Professor)

IMSUT International Joint Usage/Research Center Project <International>

Joint Research Report (Annual/Project Completion)

Annual Report

Report

During the past year, we further optimized the method of ferritin loading doxorubicin. We intend to increase the doxorubicin loading efficiency of ferritin nanocage to further enhance the efficacy of HF_n-Dox in hepatocellular carcinoma targeted therapy.

In the previous work, based on the unique shell-core structure of human natural ferritin, a 24-mer ferritin nanoshell structure with a outer shell diameter of 12 nm and an inner cavity of 8 nm was biomimetically synthesized. Using a urea-based depolymerization/repolymerization of the ferritin nanocage, doxorubicin (about 33 doxorubicin molecules) is loaded in its cavity. Relying on the natural tumor targeting ability of ferritin, ferritin drugs can efficiently target and kill tumors. However, the inefficient drug loading method has plagued the clinical transformation of ferritin drugs.

Recently, we found that through direct incubation, doxorubicin (Dox) molecules can enter the cavity of human heavy chain ferritin (HF_n). The flexible region composed of 89-92 amino acid residues is related to the loading channel of Dox. Further experiments have proved that the temperature can control the "switch" state of the drug loading channel. Under the condition of elevated temperature, the amino acid residues at positions 89-92 swing away from the position of the dual axis. At this time, the channel is in the "open" state, and the drug enters into the cavity of ferritin nanocage.

Based on this finding, high-efficiency loading of doxorubicin (approximately 100 doxorubicin molecules) can be achieved by co-incubating human heavy chain ferritin (HF_n) with the chemotherapeutic drug doxorubicin hydrochloride at 60°C for 4 hours. Compared with the previous loading method based on depolymerization/repolymerization of ferritin, this loading method does not need to add denaturant to destroy the structure of ferritin, and significantly improves the drug loading capacity and carrier recovery rate.

In the *in vivo* anti-tumor experiment, Dox-loaded HF_n was targeted and enriched in the tumor site of tumor-bearing mice, resulting in the apoptosis of a large number of tumor cells, and the tumor growth could be significantly inhibited only by the second administration. Under the premise of the same dosage, compared with the clinical drug liposomal doxorubicin (Doxil), tumor-bearing mice still had an 80% survival rate on the 40th day after HF_n-Dox treatment, and the body weight change was less than 5%. In addition, compared with free Dox, the maximum tolerated dose of HF_n-Dox in mice increased by 4 times, which significantly reduced the toxic side effects of D

ox *in vivo*. It efficiently delivers Dox to hepatocellular carcinoma tissue without damaging normal tissue, and has low immunogenicity and good biological safety.

In January 2023, professor Xiyun Yan visited the Institute of Medical Sciences, the University of Tokyo and stayed in Japan for 15 days. During this period, she had in-depth talks with Mr. Inoue, Mr. Kawaguchi, Mr. Osada, Mr. Yoshihiro ITO and others to discuss future scientific research cooperation in the fields of life science and medicine.