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I 基本情報

研究開発課題名: (日本語) ゲノム編集疾患 iPS 細胞を用いた閉塞性血管疾患のモデル樹立と病態解明 (英 語) Elucidation of the Molecular Mechanism of Moyamoya Disease using Genome-Edited Patient-Derived iPS Cells

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II 研究開発の概要

(和文)

研究開発の成果およびその意義等

脳と心臓の血管疾患はがんに次ぐ死因であり、その克服は喫緊の課題だが、非動脈硬化性血管閉塞のメカニズムは不明で、疾患モデルも存在しない。我々は、RNF213遺伝子の p. R4810K 変異がもやもや病、冠動脈疾患など多様な血管閉塞のリスク因子であることを見出してきたが、その分子機序は不明である。本研究では、もやもや病患者由来の iPS 細胞を血管平滑筋と血管内皮細胞に分化させて 2 次元および 3 次元血管モデルを樹立し、RNF213遺伝子を中心としたもやもや病の分子機構を解明することを目的とする。狙いは、疾患モデルを用いて、創薬ターゲットを同定することである。

もやもや病の特徴は2つあり、一つは平滑筋細胞の増殖と線維形成によって血管内腔が狭窄し、主幹動脈が閉塞することで虚血を来すことである。もう一つは虚血を補うための脆弱な血管網が発達し、出血の原因となるこ

とである。我々を含めて複数のグループが遺伝子改変マウスモデルの作成を試みたが成功しておらず、この2つの特性を再現したモデルは存在しない。iPS 細胞を用いた3次元オルガノイドモデルであれば、血管閉塞と異常血管網の2つを再現可能と考えた。そこでまず、もやもや病患者3名(p. R4810K変異ホモ接合体2名とヘテロ接合体1名)のiPS 細胞について、変異を修復したisogenic line を樹立した。p. R4810K変異は不完全浸透率を示し、他因子の関与が疑われることから、正常のiPS 細胞に変異を導入するよりも、変異修復が最適と判断した。また、遺伝子治療の可能性についても検討でき、iPS 細胞の個人差の問題を解決できるという利点もある。これら変異細胞と修復細胞を血管内皮細胞と神経堤細胞由来の血管平滑筋細胞に分化させた。神経堤由来としたのは、RNF213 関連血管障害の好発部位が神経堤細胞由来の血管に集中しているためである。最終的に内皮細胞と平滑筋細胞を混合して3次元培養し、血管オルガノイドを作成する方針とした。

次に CD271^{high}(直後の SOX10 陽性を確認)の神経堤細胞を経由して、血管平滑筋細胞に分化させたところ、ホモ変異株は修復株に比べて細胞増殖能が有意に高かった。内皮細胞には見られない特性であり、細胞種に応じて異なる表現型を示すと考えられた。さらに内皮細胞と平滑筋細胞を混合してオルガノイドを作成したところ、変異細胞同士の組み合わせは修復細胞同士の組み合わせと比較して、sproutingの主枝の途絶、異常な分枝の発達が認められた。それぞれ内頚動脈閉塞、もやもや血管の発達に相当すると考えられ、もやもや病のオルガノイドモデル樹立に成功した。現在、経時的な1細胞トランスクリプトーム解析を行っており、疾患の表現型を決める遺伝子発現変化の特定を目指している。

RNF213変異の浸透率が不完全であることから、その浸透率を上げる要因を明らかにすることは、モデルの精度向上と病態解明に寄与する。変異陽性の患者と変異陽性の非発症者(変異キャリア)の末梢血の RNA-Seq を行い、遺伝子発現を Bayesian network 解析で比較したところ、GATA2、SLC45A3を含む Lipid-leukocyte module の上昇を認めた。GATA2の発現を尺度に、家系内の発症者と非発症者(変異キャリア)を区別することができた。GATA2の発現は、家族性以外でも変異キャリアや対照と比べて有意に高いことが確認された。さらに、RNF213 関連脳血管症において、GATA2 が高いほど発症年齢が有意に低いことを示した。また、GATA2 が高いほど両側病変や症候例が多くなる傾向が認められた。GATA2 発現値はもやもや病の診断に有用であるとともに、同遺伝子が治療標的になりうると考えられた。我々は GATA2 発現を conditional に誘導できる細胞株を作成し、病態への関与と治療法開発に向けた研究を継続している。

GATA2 は好酸球やマスト細胞の分化等に関わり炎症を制御する。もやもや病の発症を促進する微小環境として、慢性炎症、特に2型炎症が関与している可能性が考えられた。そこで、もやもや病患者における腸内細菌叢およびウイルス感染について調べたところ、Ruminococcus gnavus (R. gnavus) の割合が増加し、HHV6 ウイルスの感

染率が低いことを突き止めた。R. gnavus の割合は GATA2 発現と緩い正の相関を示した。R. gnavus は 2 型サイトカインの IL-5 と IL-13 の産生を促進し、HHV6 はそれら抑制することが知られており、R. gnavus 上昇と HHV6 感染率低下はいずれも 2 型炎症に傾ける作用がある。実際に、患者血漿で IL-13 の上昇が確認された。IL-13 以外に、IL-5、IL-1 β は変異キャリア(非発症者)に比べて、患者(発症者)で上昇していた。先述した IPS 細胞由来の内皮細胞でも、変異により IL6ST、IAGI、IL1B、IL1RL1 (IL-13 受容体)の発現上昇が生じており、一貫して 2 型炎症を含む慢性炎症の重要性を示唆する結果となった。

以上、本研究課題において、もやもや病の 3 次元 in vitroモデルを樹立し、疾患を促進する分子メカニズムの一端を明らかにした。血管閉塞と異常血管網の発達を再現する世界初のモデルであり、今後の治療薬開発への活用が期待される。RNF213 遺伝子の p. R4810K 創始者変異が血管新生(angiogenesis)と内皮間葉転換(EndMT)を促進する遺伝子発現変化を引き起こすと同時に、内皮間葉転換を阻害する EFEMP1 等の発現変化を通じてpartial EndMT を引き起こしていた。Partial EndMT は、血管閉塞と異常血管網の発達という一見相反する 2 つの特性を同時に説明することが可能であり、もやもや病の病態の中心であることが推察される。一方、partial EndMT は動脈硬化でも認められることから、もやもや病を特徴づけるのは 2 型炎症であると考えられた。RNF213変異は IL1Bや IL6ST、IL1RL1 の発現上昇に関連し、好酸球分化に関わる GATA2 の上昇がもやもや病発症や重症化と関連し、アレルギーや潰瘍性大腸炎との関連が報告されている腸内細菌 R. gnavus の増加や IL-5、IL-13 の上昇が確認された。動脈硬化は 1 型炎症中心とされており、2 型炎症を主体とする非動脈硬化性疾患の存在が予想される。本研究で同定した EFEMP1、GATA2、SLC45A3 を含む分子が創薬標的となる他、抗 IL-6 抗体を含めて炎症性サイトカインの抑制も治療選択肢となりうることを示した。今後は免疫細胞の関与を明らかにするため、血管オルガノイドモデルへの導入を進め、もやもや病、もやもや病スペクトラム、RNF213 関連血管障害の全容解明と治療法の開発を目指す。

(英文)

Cerebrovascular and cardiovascular diseases rank as the leading causes of mortality besides cancer, posing a significant challenge to overcome. However, the mechanisms underlying non-atherosclerotic vascular occlusion remain poorly understood, and there is a lack of disease models to study this condition. We have identified the p.R4810K mutation in the *RNF213* gene as a risk factor for various vascular occlusions, including moyamoya disease and coronary artery disease. However, the molecular mechanisms underlying its effects are still unclear. In this study, our aim was to elucidate the molecular mechanisms of moyamoya disease, with a focus on the *RNF213* gene, by establishing two-dimensional and three-dimensional vascular models differentiated from induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) derived from moyamoya disease patients. Our ultimate objective is to leverage these disease models to identify potential drug targets.

Moyamoya disease is characterized by two features: narrowing of the major intracranial artery due to smooth muscle cell proliferation and fibrosis, leading to arterial occlusion and ischemia; and the development of fragile vascular networks to compensate for ischemia, which can lead to bleeding. Several research groups, including ours, have attempted to create genetically modified mouse models with limited success, and existing models fail to replicate both of these characteristics. We hypothesized that a three-dimensional organoid model using iPSCs could reproduce both vascular occlusion and abnormal vascular networks. Initially, iPSCs from three moyamoya disease patients (two homozygous for the p.R4810K mutation and one heterozygous) were used to establish isogenic lines by repairing the mutation. Since the p.R4810K mutation exhibits incomplete penetrance and involvement of other factors is suspected, we deemed mutation repair more suitable than introducing the mutation into normal iPSCs. Moreover, this approach allows for consideration of gene therapy possibilities and resolves the issue of inter-individual variability in iPSCs. These mutant and repaired cells were then differentiated into endothelial cells and vascular smooth muscle cells

derived from neural crest cells. Neural crest cells were chosen because the predilection sites of RNF213-related vascular disorders are in arteries derived from neural crest cells. Finally, endothelial cells and smooth muscle cells were mixed and cultured in a three-dimensional manner to create vascular organoids.

Prior to organoid formation, we differentiated iPSCs into endothelial cells and vascular smooth muscle cells and characterized these cell populations. We established a protocol to obtain high-purity endothelial cell that do not require cell sorting. While no differences were observed between mutant and repaired strains in terms of growth, migration capacity, or sensitivity to palmitic acid-induced cell death, there was enhanced tube formation in homozygous mutant strains. Conversely, heterozygous mutant strains did not show significant differences compared to repaired strains, consistent with the severe clinical phenotype observed in homozygotes. Single-cell transcriptome analysis revealed alterations in genes related to angiogenesis and endothelial-mesenchymal transition (EndMT), with disease-specific cell clusters observed and similar changes identified. Mutant strains exhibited greater gene alteration and variability than heterozygotes, suggesting a gene dose effect. While most changes were in the direction of promotion of angiogenesis and EndMT, upregulation of EFEMP1, which inhibits EndMT, was much prominent and consistent across all patient cell strains. Subsequent comparison of EndMT induced by IL-1β and TGFβ2 in mutant and repaired strains revealed the occurrence of partial EndMT, characterized by increased mesenchymal markers while maintaining endothelial markers, specifically in homozygous mutant strains. Suppression of EFEMP1 expression using siRNA reversed partial EndMT. These results not only revealed the involvement of partial EndMT in moyamova disease pathogenesis but also established an in vitro model of partial EndMT, which, while previously observed in vivo, had not been accurately reproduced in vitro, suggesting its utility as a valuable tool in vascular disease research.

Furthermore, we differentiated neural crest cells expressing CD271^{high} (confirmed as SOX10-positive) into vascular smooth muscle cells, which showed significantly higher proliferative capacity in homozygous mutant strains compared to repaired strains. This characteristic, not observed in endothelial cells, suggests different phenotypes depending on the cell type. When endothelial cells and smooth muscle cells were mixed to create organoids, combinations of mutant cells (mutant endothelial cells and mutant smooth muscle cells) exhibited interruptions in the main trunk of the sprouting vessels and abnormal fine vessels development compared the combination of repaired cells. These observations correspond to internal carotid artery occlusion and abnormal development of moyamoya-like vessels, confirming the successful establishment of a moyamoya disease organoid model. Currently, we are conducting longitudinal single-cell transcriptome analysis to identify gene expression changes that determine disease phenotypes.

Since the penetrance of *RNF213* mutations is incomplete, identifying factors that increase penetrance can improve the accuracy of models and contribute to understanding the pathogenesis. By performing RNA-Seq on peripheral blood from mutation-positive patients and mutation-positive non-affected carriers (mutation carriers) and comparing gene expression using Bayesian network analysis, we observed an increase in the lipid-leukocyte module, including GATA2 and SLC45A3. Using *GATA2* expression as a scale, we were able to distinguish between affected individuals and non-affected carriers (mutation carriers) within families. *GATA2* expression was significantly higher in mutation carriers than in controls, and in RNF213-related cerebrovascular disease, higher *GATA2* expression was significantly associated with younger age at onset. Moreover, higher *GATA2* expression showed a trend for higher incidence of bilateral lesions and symptomatic cases. *GATA2* expression values were not only useful for the diagnosis of moyamoya disease but also suggested that the gene could be a therapeutic target. We have developed cell lines capable of conditionally inducing *GATA2* expression and are continuing our research to explore the gene's involvement in pathogenesis and the development of therapeutic interventions.

GATA2 is involved in the differentiation of eosinophils and mast cells, regulating inflammation. It was speculated that chronic inflammation, particularly type 2 inflammation, might contribute to the development of moyamoya disease. Therefore, we investigated the gut microbiota and viral infections in moyamoya disease patients, revealing an increase in *Ruminococcus gnavus* (*R.gnavus*) and a low infection rate of HHV6 virus. The proportion of *R. gnavus* showed a loose positive correlation with *GATA2* expression. *R. gnavus* promotes the production of type 2 cytokines IL-5 and IL-13, while HHV6 is known to suppress them, indicating that both the increase in *R. gnavus* and the decrease in HHV6 infection contribute to type 2 inflammation. Indeed, an increase in IL-13 was confirmed in patient plasma. In addition to IL-13, IL-5 and IL-1β were elevated in patients (affected individuals) compared to mutation carriers (non-affected individuals). Furthermore, in endothelial cells derived from iPSCs as mentioned earlier, increased expression of *IL6ST*, *JAG1*, *IL1B*, *and IL1RL1* (IL-13 receptor) was observed due to mutations, consistently suggesting the importance of chronic inflammation, including type 2 inflammation.

In summary, in this research project, we established a three-dimensional in vitro model of moyamoya disease and partially elucidated the molecular mechanisms that promote the disease. It is the world's first model to replicate both vascular occlusion and abnormal vascular networks, and its application in future drug development is anticipated. The founder mutation p.R4810K of the RNF213 gene not only induces gene expression changes that promote angiogenesis and EndMT but also causes partial EndMT by altering the expression of genes such as *EFEMP1* that inhibits EndMT. Partial EndMT can simultaneously explain seemingly conflicting characteristics of vascular occlusion and abnormal vascular networks, suggesting its central role in the pathogenesis of moyamoya disease. Additionally, since partial EndMT is also observed in atherosclerosis, it was considered that type 2 inflammation characterizes moyamoya disease. RNF213 mutations are associated with increased expression of IL1B, IL6ST, and IL1RL1, and the elevation of GATA2, which is involved in eosinophil differentiation, is associated with the onset and severity of moyamoya disease, as well as with increased incidence of allergies and ulcerative colitis, and an increase in the gut bacterium R. gnavus and IL-5 and IL-13 levels were confirmed. Atherosclerosis is considered to be primarily driven by type 1 inflammation, and the existence of non-atherosclerotic diseases centered on type 2 inflammation is expected. We have demonstrated that molecules identified in this study, including EFEMP1, GATA2, and SLC45A3, can serve as drug targets and that inhibition of inflammatory cytokines, including anti-IL-6 antibodies, can also be a therapeutic option. Moving forward, to elucidate the involvement of immune cells, we plan to introduce vascular organoid models and aim to fully understand and develop treatments for moyamoya disease, the moyamoya disease spectrum, and RNF213related vascular disorders.