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# Promotion of Optimized Protein Therapy by Bioconjugation as a Polymeric DDS

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Abstract: In recent years, clinical applications of recombinantly produced bioactive proteins such as cytokines have attracted attention. However, since these recombinant proteins are rather unstable *in vivo*, their clinical use as therapeutic agents requires frequent administration at a high dosage. This regimen disrupts homeostasis and results in severe side effects. To overcome these problems, bioactive proteins have been conjugated with water-soluble synthetic (WSS) polymeric carriers. Chemical modification of a protein with a WSS polymeric carrier (bioconjugation) regulates tissue distribution, resulting in a selective increase in its desirable therapeutic effects and a decrease in undesirable side effects. Among several drug delivery system (DDS) technologies, bioconjugation has been recognized as one of the most efficient methods for improving therapeutic potency of proteins. However, for further enhancement of the therapeutic potency and safety of conjugated bioactive proteins, more precise regulation of the *in vivo* behavior of each protein is necessary for selective expression of its therapeutic effect. Therefore, alternative WSS polymeric modifiers in which new functions such as targeting and controlled release of drugs can be added are required for further development of bioconjugated drugs. Recently, we have synthesized a novel polymeric drug carrier, poly(vinylpyrrolidone-co-dimethyl maleic anhydride) [PVD], which was a powerful candidate drug carrier for cancer therapy. In this review, we introduce useful information that enabled us to design polymeric drug carriers and their application for protein therapy.

**Key Words:** Polyethylene glycol (PEG), bioconjugation, drug delivery system (DDS), polyvinylpyrrolidone (PVP), poly (vinylpyrrolidone-co-dimethyl maleic anhydride) [PVD], cancer therapy.

#### INTRODUCTION

In the postgenomic era, life sciences research has shifted focus from genome analyses to the functional analyses of genes and their products (proteins), and recently, there have been dramatic advances in pharmacoproteomics. The functions of numerous proteins will be clarified due to the recent advances in structural genomics. Thus, the therapeutic application of bioactive proteins such as newly identified proteins and cytokines has been highly anticipated [1-6]. However, the clinical application of most of these proteins is limited because of their unexpectedly low therapeutic effects. The reason behind this limitation is that these proteins are immediately degraded by various proteases in vivo and are rapidly excreted from blood circulation [1,6-9]. Therefore, frequent administration at an excessively high dose is required for manifestation of their therapeutic effects in vivo. This however disrupts homeostasis and leads to unexpected side effects.

Recently, to overcome the problems associated with the clinical application of bioactive proteins, attachment of water-soluble synthetic (WSS) polymers such as polyethylene glycol (PEG) to the surface of these proteins has been

developed (Fig. 1). The covalent conjugation of proteins with PEG is specifically referred to as PEGylation. Bioconjugation of proteins decreases their renal excretion rate due to the increased molecular size. In addition, since the WSS polymers cover the protein surface, attack by proteases is blocked by steric hindrance, resulting in prolongation of the *in vivo* half-life. A similar steric effect results in a decrease in the antigenicity and immunogenicity in an immune response, resulting in prolongation of *in vivo* clearance and stabilization. All these advantages lead to an increase in *in vivo* stability, and this in turn, enables a decrease in the dose as well as time of administration.

In fact, PEGylated granulocyte-colony stimulating factor (PEG-G-CSF; PEG filgrastim), PEGylated interferon-alpha (PEG-IFN-a; PEGASYS, PEG-Intron), PEGylated asparaginase (PEG-Asp; ONCASPER), PEGylated adenosine deaminase (PEG-ADA; ADAGEN) and Poly(stylene-comaleic acid)-conjugated neocarzinostatin (SMANCS) have demonstrated a marked improvement in therapeutic efficacy in comparison with the native forms, and their clinical applications have already been reported [10-17]. SMANCS dissolved in lipiodol exhibits a marked antitumor effect when used in chemotherapy for targeting hepatomas [13,14]. Furthermore, studies have demonstrated the efficacy of PEGylated Interleukin-2 (PEG-IL-2) in the treatment of patients with metastatic melanoma and carcinoma [18-20]. These results suggested that bioconjugation with a WSS polymeric carrier is a very pragmatic approach for successful therapies with various drugs such as enzymes and antitumor agents. In

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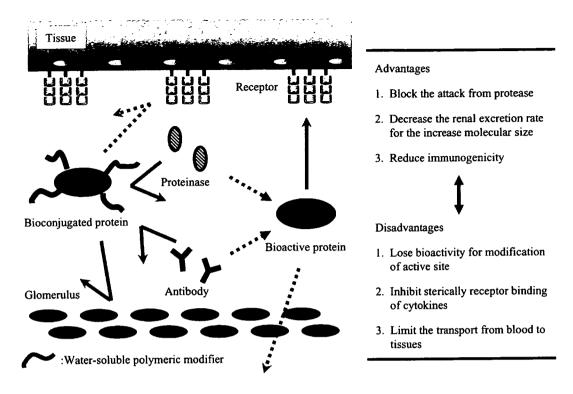


Fig. (1). Characteristics of bioconjugation.

the future, bioconjugated drugs with a WSS polymeric carrier should be more extensive clinical application.

However, with the exception of a few examples, the clinical use of bioconjugated proteins remains limited. This is due to the conflicting effects of polymer conjugation of bioactive proteins; conjugation with a polymeric modifier inhibits the transport from blood to tissues and the binding to their receptors. In addition, specific activities of proteins are decreased by the attachment of polymeric modifiers to active sites. Therefore, it is important to select an optimal modifying molecule based on its suitability for bioconjugation and the properties of individual bioactive proteins and accumulate basic data such as the details of the relationship among molecular weight, modification rate, and activity of the modified protein. Additionally, we must consider the optimal polymer-conjugation conditions to (a) increase plasma halflife and stability, (b) control behavior in the body (wellbalanced tissue transport), and (c) selectively enhance desirable therapeutic activities of bioactive proteins without increasing their side effects.

In this review, we first show the fundamental information enabling us to design the bioconjugated bioactive proteins applicable to therapeutic use. Next we discussed the novel polymeric carries with desired DDS functions such as targeting capability and controlled release of drugs for cancer therapy.

#### NONIONIC WSS POLYMERIC CARRIERS THAT ARE SUITABLE FOR IMPROVEMENT IN BLOOD RESIDENCY OF DRUGS

The fate and distribution of the conjugates between WSS polymeric carriers and drugs (including proteins as drugs) can be attributed to the physicochemical properties of polymeric modifiers, such as molecular weight, electric charge, and hydrophilic balance [21-23]. Therefore, selecting a polymeric modifier by considering the influence of physicochemical characteristics on its pharmacokinetics is extremely important. PEG is a WSS polymeric modifier with low toxicity and antigenicity, and it has been frequently used for bioconjugation. However, PEG also has some disadvantages as a drug carrier-primarily the fact that PEG has a functional group only at the end of the chain, which limits the possibilities of adding new functions to the drugs for a more precise control of their pharmacokinetics and tissue distribution. From this viewpoint, modifiable polymeric modifiers are required to control the biopharmaceutical characteristics of conjugated drugs. In view of this, in a study on mice bearing solid tumors, we focused on nonionic WSS polymers and assessed the pharmacokinetic properties of various polymeric modifiers that could be modified by changes in their physicochemical properties.

The polymer formulations that were used were PEG, polyvinylpyrrolidone (PVP), polyacrylamide (PAAm), polydimethylacrylamide (PDAAm), polyvinyl alcohol (PVA), and dextran. PVP, PAAm, and PDAAm were functionalized by the introduction of various co-monomers during radical polymerization. PVA and dextran have many primary OH groups that can be used for conjugation on the side chain. Mice were intravenously injected with various <sup>125</sup>I-labeled WSS polymers of the same molecular size (MW: 5000) for studying the elimination profiles of these polymers (Fig. 2). All polymers showed biphasic elimination patterns. PEG and dextran, which are used frequently as drug carriers, were rapidly eliminated from blood circulation. On the other hand, PVA and PVP circulated for a longer period than the other

polymers, while these nonionic polymers had the same molecular size as PEG. PVP exhibited the longest plasma halflife among all the nonionic WSS polymers studied, and 25% of the injected dose remained in the body after 3 h. Pharmacokinetic analysis revealed definite differences among the polymers with respect to plasma clearance and tissue distribution. PVP showed the longest mean residence time (MRT) among all polymers examined. The total clearance of PVP was approximately 10-fold lower than that of PEG. The distribution volume of dextran was the highest among all these polymers; its volume was twice that of PVP. In this study. although all the polymers had the same molecular weight dispersity and were nonionic and water soluble, each polymer showed a characteristic distribution. PVP had the longest circulation time, and its tissue distribution was extremely restricted. In addition, PVP could be easily mixed with various functional groups by radical polymerization in order to control its physicochemical properties and to add functions such as targeting or sustained release. These results suggest that PVP is one of the most feasible polymeric modifiers for localizing conjugated drugs in blood. In fact, PVP-conjugated tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF-α) showed a higher half-life than PEG-conjugated TNF-α despite having the same molecular size [24].

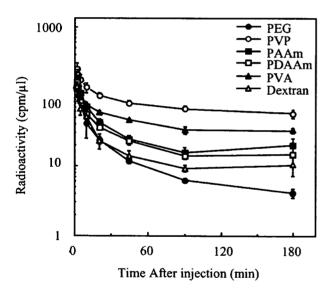


Fig. (2). Plasma clearace of various WSS polymers in mice after intravenous injection [24].

Here we show, using TNF- $\alpha$  as examples, the possibility that PVP-conjugated proteins overcomes their drawbacks, allowing their clinical application. The antitumor effects of TNF- $\alpha$  result not only from its direct cytotoxic action against various tumor cells, but also from activation of antitumor effector immune cells in the blood and specific damage to the tumor vessels. In addition, in the process of bleeding necrosis in the tumor vessels, the vascular permeability of the tumor vessels is selectively increased, promoting transport from blood to the tumor tissue. On the other hand, the increase in blood-residency would lead to a decrease in the distribution of TNF- $\alpha$  in the liver and spleen, which are the major sources of unfavorable side-effects. Therefore, improvement in blood stasis enhances all antitumor action mechanisms of TNF-α increasing its bioavailablity. As a result, PVP-conjugated TNF-α had a more potent antitumor effect than PEG-conjugated TNF-α, without any toxic side effects [25,26]. This phenomenon has also been observed in PVP-conjugated interleukin-6 (IL-6) and leukemia inhibitory factor [27].

#### DEVELOPMENT OF TISSUE-TARGETING POLY-**MERIC CARRIERS**

It has been reported that bioconjugation of TNF- $\alpha$  and IL-6 with PEG and PVP improved their resistance to proteinase and their plasma half-lives, thereby resulting in greater therapeutic potency [24-31]. However, for further enhancement of therapeutic potency and safety of conjugated bioactive proteins, a more precise control of the in vivo behavior of each protein is necessary. Thus, the development of novel WSS polymeric carriers with targeting capability to specific tissue is expected; PEG and PVP are useful and powerful polymeric carriers for improving plasma half-lives. Using PVP as a backbone polymer, we have evaluated the in vivo pharmacokinetics of synthesized PVP derivatives with various electric charges or hydrophilic-hydrophobic balance. For example, hydrophobic PVP derivatives that contain vinyl laurate and stylene accumulated in the spleen and liver, respectively, after intravenous injection [32]. In contrast, anionized PVP derivatives were retained in the blood or accumulated in the kidneys (Fig. 3). Carboxyl PVP, which contained an optimal amount of acrylate, distributed to the kidneys but over-carboxylation resulted in excretion through urine [33]; the same pattern was observed with sulfonated PVP. The in vitro cytotoxicity of carboxylated PVP against renal tubular cells was low, and its renal targeting capacity was better than that of other carriers. Anionic polyaspartamides are transiently distributed in the kidneys and are rapidly excreted in the urine [34]. However, we found that these anionic polymers were unsuitable as renal targeting carriers because conjugates composed of these anionic polymers and the drug did not accumulate in sufficient quantities to produce therapeutic effects.

Based on a series of research studies, we have synthesized a novel polymeric drug carrier, namely, poly(vinylpyrrolidone-co-dimethyl maleic anhydride) [PVD], by radical copolymerization and mixed the reactive comonomers [dimethyl maleic anhydride (DMMAn) and vinylpyrrolidone (VP)] in a ratio of 1:5 (Fig. 4). We found that approximately 80% of the dose of PVD (1:5) selectively accumulated in the kidneys 24 h after intravenous injection. Although the PVD (1:5) that was accumulated in the kidneys was gradually excreted in the urine, approximately 40% was retained 96 h after the treatment was commenced [35]. The high renal accumulation and retention of PVD (1:5) makes it a more useful targeting carrier than other agents. Although most anionized polymers are safer than cationized polymers, they exhibit cytotoxicity at high doses. Poly(VP-co-MAn), which has the same molecular size, polydispersity, and carboxyl group content as PVD (1:5), produced cytotoxicity in LLC-MK2 cells at higher concentrations (Fig. 5). In contrast, PVD (1:5) produced no evidence of pathological effects in mice at a dose of 10 mg/day for 28 days. A subcutaneous dose of 50 mg PVD (1:5) was well tolerated by mice. The safety of PVD (1:5) appears to be similar to that of PEG and PVP,

Fig. (3). Kidney accumulation of PVP and anionized PVP derivatives after intravenous injection in mice [33].

Fig. (4). Chemical structures and characteristics of poly(vinylpyrrolidone-co-dimethyl maleic anhydride)[PVD].

which are used clinically. Thus, PVD (1:5) appears to be a safe polymeric carrier with a considerably higher renal targeting and retention capacity than any other renal targeting carrier.

Renal disease is a serious health problem on the increase in the world. There is no cure for renal disease, and few strategies are available for prevention [36,37]. Bioactive proteins, such as superoxide dismutase (SOD) and interleukin-10, have been expected to prevent the progression of renal disease, but their therapeutic potency were too low because they were poorly distribution to the kidney. The development of a renal delivery system that selectively carries drugs to the kidneys is a promising approach for limiting tissue distribution and controlling toxicity. Several renal DDS have been previously described [38,39]. One approach involves prodrugs that are cleaved by kidney-associated enzymes to release the drugs in the kidney [40]. However,

these prodrugs generally do not accumulate in the kidneys as a result of plasma protein binding and limited transport to the kidney. Low-molecular weight proteins, such as lysozyme, have been used as carriers because they are reabsorbed by the kidneys. Unfortunately, they also produced strong renal toxicity and cardiovascular side effects [41]. Streptavidine carriers bind to biotin in the kidney, but they are immunogenic and have limited renal accumulation due to their large molecular size [42,43]. Thus, it is important to develop an effective renal DDS that not only targets the kidney but also has excellent safety. In this regard, we attempted to design novel targeting polymeric modifier to renal system. To cite a case, PVD (1:5)-modified SOD accumulated in the kidneys after intravenous injection and accelerated recovery from HgCl<sub>2</sub>-induced acute renal failure [35,44]. In contrast, PVPmodified SOD and native SOD were not as effective, because of its poor renal accumulation. Thus, PVD (1:5) represents a promising candidate as a renal targeting carrier.

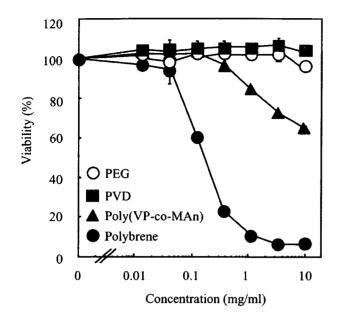


Fig. (5). In vitro cytotoxicity of PVD [35].

#### POLYMERIC DDS FOR OPTIMIZED CANCER **CHEMOTHERAPY**

The major limitation of antitumor agents, typified by Adriamycin (ADR, doxorubicin), used in clinical applications, is its severe toxicity, such as bone marrow suppression and cardiotoxicity [45-48]. This is caused by the high and frequent dose of antitumor agents, which have a very short half-life and a wide tissue distribution. The chemical conjugation of antitumor agents with WSS polymeric carriers has been found recently to overcome these defects. The conjugation of low molecular weight antitumor agents to WSS polymeric carriers, such as N-(2-hydroxypropyl)methylacrylamide, divinylether-co-maleic anhydride, styrene-co-maleic anhydride, dextran, and PEG, offers a potential mechanism to improve cancer chemotherapy [14,49-53]. Distribution of the conjugates, which have a higher molecular weight, is usually restricted to the intravascular space after intravenous injection due to the low permeability in most organs with a continuous capillary bed. It is known that vascular permeability of macromolecules into solid tumors and its retention in tumor tissues are enhanced compared with normal tissues. This is generally called the enhanced permeability and retention (EPR) effect [54-56]. As a result, the polymeric DDS may selectively expand the therapeutic windows of antitumor agents.

However, there is a restriction on the clinical application of this polymeric DDS for cancer chemotherapy. For instance, after the ADR that is taken up into the tumor cells intercalates between double strands of DNA, its antitumor activity is induced by inhibition of DNA replication and topoisomerase activity in the tumor cells [57]. However, the intercalation of polymer-conjugated ADR between double strands of DNA is based on macromolecular interactions. which are sterically hindered by the attached polymeric carrier. Thus, for obtaining in vivo antitumor effects, a sufficient amount of antitumor agents is required to be released from the conjugates, because polymer-conjugated anticancer drugs

themselves seldom show antitumor activity. However, in most cases, the conjugate between an antitumor agent and a polymeric carrier is formed through stable covalent bonding. As a result, the antitumor therapeutic effects of these conjugates have often not been observed in their clinical trials. To overcome these problems, a relatively unstable linker was used for the conjugation between an antitumor agent and a polymeric carrier. Most of the antitumor agents released from the conjugates have a linker fragment. Furthermore, these modified antitumor agents show much lower specific activities than original antitumor agents in their native form, because the linker fragment is attached to an active functional group of the antitumor agents [58]. Thus, it is necessary to develop a novel polymeric DDS for optimization of cancer chemotherapy.

There are certain characteristics needed by the polymeric drug carrier to (a) be excellent in blood residency for effectively obtaining the EPR effect in tumors, (b) gradually release the fully active form (native form) of antitumor agents, and (c) efficiently release the native antitumor agents under the slightly acidic conditions, if possible, because it is known that the pH of tumor tissues is slightly lower than that of normal tissues [59,60]. From such a viewpoint, some polymeric carriers, typified by divinylether-co-maleic anhydride and styrene-co-maleic anhydride, were developed [50,55]. Some maleic anhydride, that is one of the acid anhydride, were contained in the structure of these polymeric carriers. and the antitumor agents were conjugated with these polymeric carriers via the formation of amide bonds between the amino group of antitumor agents and the acid anhydride groups. However, the amide bonds formed through maleic anhydride are very stable near neutral pH, and the antitumor agents are released from the conjugates under strong acidic conditions (<pH 3.0). As a result, the antitumor therapeutic effects of these conjugates have often not been observed in their clinical trials.

DMMAn with a double bound in its structure is used as a pH-reversible protective agent of amino groups in proteins and chemical compounds [61,62]. DMMAn binds to an amino group by forming an amide bond through its acid anhydride group at a pH higher than 8.0, and then reversibly dissociates from the amino group, thereby changing into a slightly acidic from neutral. Therefore, if a polymeric carrier with this function of DMMAn is synthesized, it meets the above conditions and will release a native drug in response to changes in pH.

#### APPLICATION OF PVD FOR CANCER THERAPY

As described above, PVD contains DMMAn that reacts with an amino group of a drug by forming an amide bond through its acid anhydride group in response to changes in pH. Reflecting the property of DMMAn, PVD could release fully active drugs in the native form in response to the change in pH near neutrality, and gradually released drugs at neutral pH 7.0 and slightly acidic pH 6.0 (Fig. 6). Further, since the pH of inflammatory tissues and tumor tissues is well-known to be lower than that of normal tissues [59,60], the PVD conjugates would possibly release free drugs more efficiently in inflammatory tissues and tumor tissues.

In view of this, to clarify the usefulness of PVD as a polymeric drug carrier for optimization of cancer therapy, we examined the therapeutic efficacy of conjugate between PVD and ADR [63]. PVD (1:20) was radically synthesized with DMMAn and VP in a ratio of 1:20. PVD (1:20) also had a

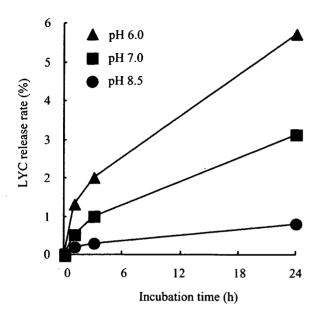


Fig. (6). pH-sensitive controlled release of Lucifer yellow cadaverine (LYC) from the conjugates between PVD (1:20) and LYC [63].

long plasma half-life as well as PVP, rather than PEG. Unlike in the case of PVD (1:5), which selectively accumulated in the kidneys, the tissue distribution of PVD (1:20) was extremely restricted. We show here that the PVD (1:20)conjugated ADR showed superior antitumor activity against S-180 sarcomas in mice and had less side effects than free ADR (Fig. 7 and Table 1). As shown in Fig. 7, all of the mice administered with free ADR at a dose of 600 µg/mouse and 200 µg/mouse died within 6-10 days after their intravenous injection (within 13 days or 17 days after tumor inoculation) because of toxicity of ADR. There was a marked weight loss in these mice after the high dose of free ADR. In mice treated with free ADR at a dose of 60 µg/mouse, although tumor growth was slightly inhibited without causing sudden death or weight loss, complete tumor regression, defined as disappearance of tumor without regrowth within 100 days, was not observed. In contrast, the antitumor activity of PVD (1:20)-ADR at a dose of 60 µg ADR/mouse was more effective than that of free ADR at 60 µg/mouse. Tumor growth was remarkably and completely inhibited by PVD (1:20)-ADR at a dose of 200 µg ADR/mouse and 600 µg ADR/mouse. Complete tumor regression was observed in 75%, 25%, and 25% of mice treated with PVD (1:20)-ADR at a dose of 600 µg ADR/mouse, 200 µg ADR/mouse, and 60 µg ADR/mouse, respectively. During the experimental period, all doses of PVD (1:20)-ADR were well tolerated, and no loss in body weight was observed. Overall, the therapeutic window is markedly increased. These results have important clinical implications for the use of antitumor chemotherapeutic agents in patients. The expansion of the therapeutic window is probably due to the following reasons. PVD (1:20)-ADR may preferentially accumulate in solid

tumors due to the EPR effect. Additionally, as it is known that pH of tumor tissues is slightly lower than that of normal tissues, the PVD (1:20)-ADR is likely to release free ADR more efficiently in tumor tissues. These results indicate that PVD (1:20) is an effective polymeric carrier for cancer therapy, accordingly it would be expected the clinical application of PVD (1:20)-conjugated cytokines as antitumor agents.

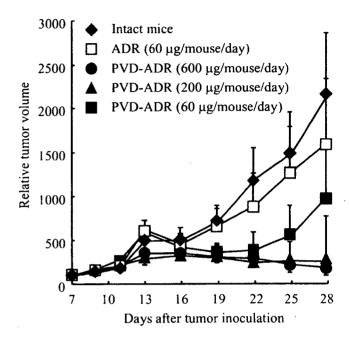


Fig. (7). Antitumor effect of Adriamycin (ADR) and PVD (1:20)-ADR on sarcoma-180 solid tumors [63].

Table 1. Antitumor Effect of ADR and PVD (1:20)-ADR on Sarcoma-180 Solid Tumors [63]

Agent	Dose (μg/mouse/day)	Complete regression
ADR	600 200 60	All mice died until 13 days All mice died until 17 days 0/4
PVD (1:20)-ADR	600 200 60	3/4 1/4 1/4

Complete regression was defined when tumor was not regrown for >100days.

#### **SUMMARY**

In this review, we have showed the usefulness of bioconjugation for DDS to selectively enhance desirable therapeutic activities of bioactive proteins without increasing their side effects. The following sequential and multiple strategies are required for the optimization of protein therapy based on bioconjugation: (a) optimum selection of the polymeric modifier by considering the disposition of the drugs and objectives such as targeting or controlled release; (b) bioconjugation based on the estimation of characteristics such as molecular size, modification site, degree of modification, and specific activity; and (c) assessment of therapeutic effects and pharmacokinetics of bioconjugated drugs. This fundamental approach will enable the establishment of such a methodology of bioconjugation. It may facilitate optimum molecular design of a polymeric modifier in DDS.

On the other hand, to further optimize protein therapy, it is necessary to develop a system to create mutant proteins (muteins) with desired properties, such as superior bioactivity. Recently, we developed the efficient way to create desired muteins by phage display technique. Using this technique, we created a lysine-deficient mutant TNF-α, in which all of the lysine residues were replaced with other amino acids, with full bioactivity and attempted site-specific PE-Gylation at its N-terminus [64,65]. In most cases, PEGylation occurs randomly at multiple lysine residues in the proteins, some of which may be located in or near the protein active site. Accordingly, the bioactivity of randomly PEGylated wild-type TNF-α is markedly lower than of the unmodified TNF-α. But then, this N-terminal mono-PEGylated mutant TNF-α had comparable bioactivity to unmodified TNF-α in vitro, other properties including plasma half-life, antitumor activity, and toxicity were greatly improved. This protein-drug innovation system will open the new way for promotion of protein therapy, by applying the technique of optimal bioconjugation as described in this review.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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#### **ABBREVIATIONS**

**ADR** = Adriamycin

**DDS Drug Delivery System** 

Dimethyl maleic anhydride **DMMAn** 

**EPR Enhanced Permeability and Retention** 

IL-6 Interleukin-6

MAn Maleic anhydride

**MRT** Mean residence time

**PAAm** = Polyacrylamide

**PEG** Polyethylene glycol

**PEG-ADA** PEGylated adenosine deaminase

PEG-Asp PEGylated asparaginase

PEG-G-CSF = PEGylated granulocyte-colony stimulating

factor

PEG-IFN- $\alpha$  = PEGylated interferon-alpha

PEG-IL-2 = PEGylated Interleukin-2 PDAAm = Polydimethylacrylamide

**PVA** Polyvinyl alcohol **PVD** Poly(vinylpyrrolidone-co-dimethyl

maleic anhydride)

PVP = Polyvinylpyrrolidone

Poly(stylene-co-maleic acid)-conjugated **SMANCS** 

neocarzinostatin

SOD Superoxide dismutase

TNF-α Tumor necrosis factor-alpha

Vinylpyrrolidone

WSS Water-soluble synthetic

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### 創薬の立場からの DDS

# プロテオーム創薬からの DDS 開発

鎌田春彦\* 堤 康央\*

#### 要 旨

がんなどの難治性疾患を克服するため、より有効ながん治療法の開発が急務であり、全タンパク質の構造と機能解析をもとにした創薬プロテオーム解析に注目が集まっている。本総説では、このプロテオーム解析の結果から得られた情報をもとに、医薬価値に優れた薬物開発を行うための DDS 戦略を提示し、ファージ表面提示法を用いたタンパク質構造変異体の創出とその DDS 的有用性を紹介する。

#### プロテオミクスとがん治療

ヒトゲノム解析が終了し、ヒトの設計図となる遺伝子の配列が明らかになったが、それは細胞や組織、さらに臓器の機能の一部が明らかになったにすぎない。すなわち遺伝子は、マイクロ RNA など RNA として機能する一部を除き<sup>1)2)</sup>、そのほとんどが転写・翻訳されており、生体内の特定の細胞や組織で作られる全タンパク質によって機能を明らかにすること機能を明らかにする。これらのタンパク質がネットワークを形成するではより、タンパク質がネットワークを形成の活性を阻害する薬物をデザインし、最終的に疾患の発症を抑制、あるいは症状を緩和する薬がの創出を行う、いわゆるプロテオーム創薬が

がんは複雑かつ多段階のステップを通じて 発症する難治性の疾患であり、細胞内におけ るタンパク質の挙動、特にリン酸化などの翻 訳後修飾3 やタンパク質分解4,代謝物5 の影 響など, DNA チップなどを用いた大規模遺 伝子発現解析法のみではがんの発症や悪性化 を規定することはできないと考えられている. また、現在のがん治療は外科的な治療が主体 となっており、非常に有効な治療法であるも のの, 転移がんのように外科的手術が不可能 な症例も数多く存在し, より有効ながん治療 法の開発が急務である. したがってより有効 な医薬品開発を行うために、がんの初期ある いはそれぞれの悪性度によってタンパク質の 特定の機能のみをピンポイントに阻害しうる 新しい DDS の開発が必要になるものと考え られており、プロテオミクスなどの新しい大 規模解析法が新規分子標的治療の開発に有効 な手段であることが示唆されている<sup>6</sup>.

キーワード:プロテオーム創薬, DDS, ファージ表面提示法, バイオコンジュゲーション, TNF

難治性疾患の克服に貢献するものと期待されている.

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### でしたすール環構の選択

このような観点のもと、病態発現メカニズ ムの解析に役立つ情報を集積するため、患者 由来のさまざまな試料を用いたプロテオーム 解析が幾つか報告され、がんなどの疾患の 診断に有効なバイオマーカーに関して幾つ かの報告が出始めている. 特に surface-enhanced laser desorption ionization - time of flight (SELDI-TOF) 質量分析装置を用い た卵巣がんの診断においては、非常に有効な 診断結果が得られている"。また、2次元泳 動ゲルをベースにしたがん組織バイオプシー の検討では、膀胱がん
りや肺がん
りをはじめ とするさまざまながんに対して、その進行度 による分子マーカーの違いなどが明らかにな りつつある10~12). これらバイオマーカーの探 索が進む一方で、膜タンパク質を標的として プロテオーム解析し、肺がんに特異的な発現 タンパク質を探索した例においては、腫瘍の 細胞膜上に特異的に発現する幾つかの分子が 同定され、それに対する抗体を投与すること で腫瘍特異的に集積することが確認されてい る. Oh らの報告によると<sup>13)</sup>, 細胞膜分画の プロテオーム解析を通じて腫瘍血管に多く 発現することが明らかとなったアミノペプチ ダーゼやアネキシンを標的とした抗体治療が、 有効性の高いがん治療として明らかになって いる。現在、疾患プロテオーム解析はまだ緒 に就いたばかりであり、いまだ暗中模索の状 態ではあるものの、このようなさまざまな有 効な治療標的の探索に成功したものもあり, プロテオミクス技術を活用した解析研究が医 薬品シーズ・創薬ターゲットとなるタンパク 質の探索に結びつくものと期待されている.

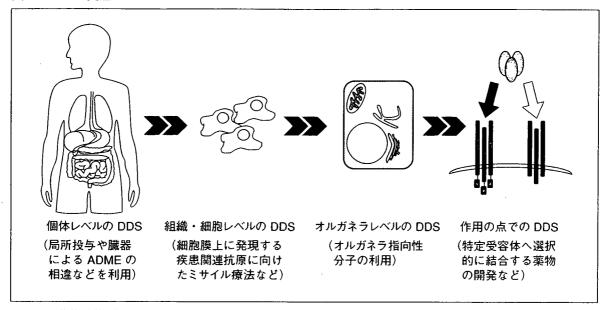
> 機能性タンパク質を応用した DDS への試み

しかし、疾患プロテオーム解析の結果から

発見された医薬品シーズ・創薬ターゲットに 対する薬物治療戦略として、単純にその標的 タンパク質に結合する薬物の作製のみでは治 療効果は上がらないものと考えられる。特に リガンドー受容体の結合により細胞を刺激す るサイトカインのようなタンパク質では、一 般に体内安定性に乏しく、その治療効果を示 すために大量頻回投与を余儀なくされてお り、臨床応用が極めて制限されている、さら に、サイトカインは1対1の相互作用を示す のではなく、複数の受容体やリガンドがお互 いに分子間相互作用しながら高度にその機能 が制御されており、この点においても臨床応 用に利用可能なサイトカインは限局されてい るのが現状である. したがって, 切れ味鋭い 作用を示すことが期待されるサイトカインを 利用した薬物治療を行うに当たって、既存の DDS を踏まえたうえで、図1に示すような より高度な DDS 技術の進歩が必要不可欠で あると考えられる. すなわち, 臓器や組織レ ベルの標的指向性(ターゲティング能)を付 与するだけでなく、細胞、さらに細胞内に含 まれる各種オルガネラや作用の点でのターゲ ティング能を付与する必要がある.

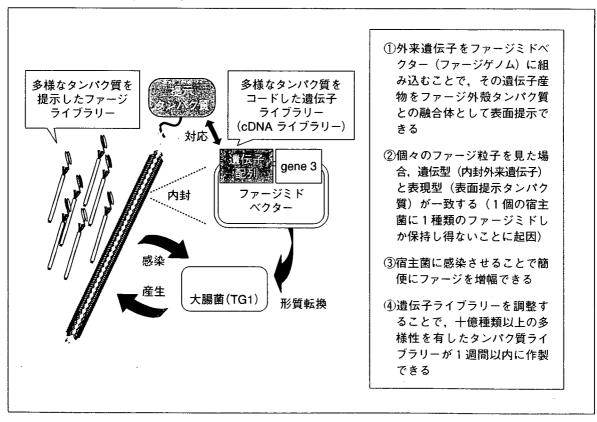
このような現状を踏まえて、我々は受容体に結合するリガンドとなる構造変異タンパク質を作製し、プロテオーム創薬を指向した類にで、医薬価値にいるの開発を行うことで、医薬他の関系を変異タンパク質を作製するで、医薬他の関系を作製するの関系を作製するで、関連を作製するで、関連では、ファージ表面上に提示させた質の中から、特定ターゲットに親和性でいるが、サージを持つペプチド・タンパク質を結合力に表面とででで、アージ表面提示法の利点は、大腸菌とでに、ファージミドベクターを利用することで簡便に

#### 図1 DDS の変遷



ADME: 薬物動態 (absorption, distribution, metabolism, excretion)

#### 図2 ファージ表面提示法の概要



ファージが増幅できるため、ペプチド・タンパク質ライブラリーの構築からスクリーニングに至る過程をわずか2週間という短期間で

行える点にある. 我々はこのファージ表面提示法を応用し、タンパク質の構造変異体ライブラリーを作製することで、網羅的な機能性

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構造変異タンパク質の作製を通じて分子間相 互作用を自由に制御できる機能性タンパク質 構造変異体の創出を行った。この方法論は, 膨大な構造変異体ライブラリーの中から目的 とする薬物を選択する方法論であるが,我々 の戦略は構造変異タンパク質ライブラリーの 中から医薬価値に優れた機能性人工タンパク 質を迅速創出しようとするものであり,分子 進化戦略とも言うべき,他に類を見ないもの である.

この構造変異体ライブラリーの作製におい て、我々は抗がん活性を持つサイトカインと して臨床応用が期待された TNF を標的に定 めた. TNF は腫瘍を特異的に傷害するサイ トカインとして見いだされ、夢の抗がん剤と して一躍脚光を浴びた®. しかしながら TNF は体内安定性に極めて乏しいため、その臨床 応用の際には大量頻回投与を余儀なくされ、 その結果, 発熱や血圧低下, エンドトキシン 様ショックといった重篤な副作用を招いてし まうことが明らかとなってきた<sup>101</sup>. 例えば, TNF を全身性の抗がん剤として用いようと した場合、副作用を回避するためにはその投 与量を抗腫瘍作用の発現に必要な量のわずか 1/5~1/25 に制限せざるを得ない. 以上の理 由から、その切れ味鋭い抗腫瘍活性にいまだ 大きな期待が込められつつも、TNF の医 薬品化はほとんど断念されようとしているの が現状である. この点我々は、タンパク質の 体内安定性を向上させ、目的治療作用の選択 的発現能を付与できる高分子バイオコンジュ ゲート化 DDS を開発しようと試みてきた. タンパク質に水溶性高分子を結合させる高分 子バイオコンジュゲート化 DDS は、タンパ ク質の生体内安定性を向上できる最適の方法 と世界的に位置づけられているものの1402001, その成功例は残念ながら少ない. この最大の 原因は、タンパク質の活性中心に存在するリ シン残基へのランダムな高分子導入によって

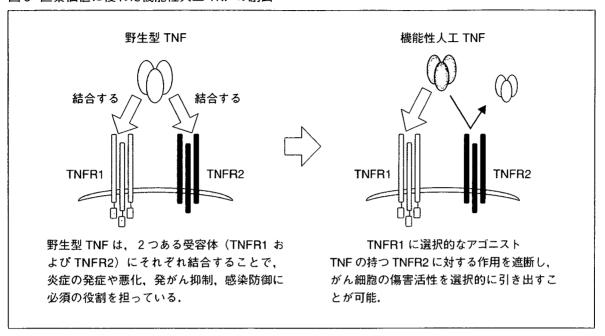
生じてしまう致命的な比活性低下にある.

そこで我々は、部位特異的なバイオコン ジュゲーション法を活用するために、まず TNF 分子内に存在するすべてのリシン残基 を欠損した TNF を作製した<sup>isi</sup>. TNF は, 従 来までの点突然変異解析や立体構造解析から, リシンが立体構造形成や受容体結合に重要な 役割を担っている<sup>21-23)</sup> ため, 野生型 TNF と 同等の活性を保持したリシン欠損体は理論上 作製できないと考えられていた. しかし我々 はこの既成概念を覆す知見、すなわち TNF 中の全リシン残基(6個)を一挙に他のアミノ 酸へ置換することで逆に野生型 TNF の5倍 以上もの生物活性を有するリシン欠損 TNF を創出することに成功している<sup>30</sup>. TNF の N末端は TNF の持つ生物活性とは無関係で あることが知られており、この機能性リシン 欠損タンパク質をバイオコンジュゲーション 法と組み合わせることで、比活性の低下がほ とんどないバイオコンジュゲート化、TNF変 異体の作製に成功した. このN末端特異的な バイオコンジュゲート化 TNF リシン欠損体 は、従来のバイオコンジュゲーションを施し たものと比較し, in vitro の活性で約 50 倍 も優れていた、したがって、この「N末端ア ミノ基のみを標的とした部位特異的高分子バ イオコンジュゲート化 DDS 法」は、従来法 の諸問題を一挙に克服する非常に有効な DDS であることが明らかになった.

TNFR に指向性アゴニストを用いた がんのターテティング療法

一方で、TNF は2種類の受容体(TNFR1 および TNFR2)を介して作用発現している が、このうち TNFR1 は TNF の抗腫瘍メカ ニズムの活性化に、TNFR2 は TNF の副作 用発現に関与しているものと推定されてい る<sup>25)</sup>. 興味深いことに、マウス TNFR2 に結 合しないヒト TNF は、マウス固形がんに対

#### 図3 医薬価値に優れた機能性人工 TNF の創出



してマウス TNF と同程度の抗腫瘍効果を発揮するのに対し、その致死毒性はマウス TNF の 1/50 以下であることが知られている<sup>26)</sup>. また、TNFR1 および TNFR2 のノックアウトマウスの検討から、腫瘍血管内皮細胞に対する傷害活性や血管透過性の亢進が TNFR1 を介して発現することが予想されている<sup>27)28)</sup>. TNFR2 には結合せず、TNFR1 にのみ選択的に結合して作用発現できる TNF変異体(TNF のアミノ酸置換体)、TNFR1 指向性 TNF アゴニストは、これまでその圧倒的な抗腫瘍効果にもかかわらず、強い副作用ゆえに臨床応用が制限されてきた TNF の臨床応用への道を開くものと期待される

以上の観点から我々は、先述した我々が独自に確立してきたファージ表面提示法を駆使して、TNFR1を介した生物活性が野生型TNFよりも優れ、かつTNFR2とは結合しないTNF変異体(TNFR1指向性アゴニスト)を創出し、受容体への選択的な結合性(標的指向性)を有する「高度なDDS機能を持った新たな抗腫瘍サイトカイン」の分子設計戦略を考えた(図3)、我々は、タンパク質の立

体構造解析の結果から明らかになっている各 受容体への結合に重要とされるアミノ酸配列 を網羅的に改変した構造変異 TNF を発現す るファージライブラリーを作製し、単一の受 容体にのみ選択的に結合する構造変異 TNF を探索した、約6千万種類の構造変異 TNF を内包した TNF 変異体ライブラリーより スクリーニングした結果, TNFR1 および TNFR2 それぞれに特異的に結合するクロー ンを多数得ることができた (現在投稿中). TNFR1 にのみ選択的に結合するクローン群 では、TNFR1 への結合性が最大で約 80% も向上しているにもかかわらず、TNFR2 へ の結合性は野生型の 0.05% 以下にまで低下 していた. 現在, この TNF 構造変異体の生 物活性に関して検討しており、今後この変異 体のアゴニストあるいはアンタゴニストとし ての特性が明らかになるものと期待している.

ヒトゲノム解読の結果から、ヒト遺伝子が 約2万程度という予想をはるかに下回る数で しか構成されていない事実が明らかとなり、 遺伝子の数でのみ高等な機能が発揮されてい ないことがほぼ証明された。すなわち、ヒト のような高等とされる生物においても、限ら れた遺伝子を最大限に利用するシステムが生 命現象の中に内包されており、1つの遺伝子 が効率的に機能していることが明らかとなっ たわけである. この遺伝子の機能は、RNA として機能している一部の遺伝子を除けば, ほとんどの場合タンパク質という形をとって 具現されている. すなわち, 高等な生命活動 を調整するのは遺伝子の数を頼むのでなく, 遺伝子から翻訳されたタンパク質が数多くの タンパク質との相互作用を経て、極めて効率 的に機能することで発揮されるものと考えら れている、ゲノム解析の結果から、実在する と考えられている機能未知のタンパク質は総 遺伝子数の約半分であるとされるが、機能が 既知とされるタンパク質もこのような分子間 相互作用に着目した機能性アゴニストやアン タゴニストの開発により、全く未知の機能が 明らかになってくるものと期待される. この ような機能が既知あるいは未知にかかわら ず、タンパク質の機能がより詳細に解析され ることにより、生命の生業にとどまらず数多 くの疾患の原因分子が明らかにされ、ポスト ゲノムシークエンス研究としてこの創薬を最 終目的とした場合、今後の疾患プロテオーム 解析情報を有効活用した画期的創薬に貢献し うるものと期待される. 本総説で示した複数 の受容体への結合性を目的とする受容体にの み結合させるタンパク質構造変異体作製技術 は、「分子レベルの DDS | を達成するうえで 必要不可欠なものであると考えられる。さら に、このような「分子レベルの DDS」をタン パク質性医薬品の開発に応用することで、い まだ有効な治療法の存在しないがんに対する 治療薬が開発できるものと期待している.

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# DDS from The Viewpoint of Drug Discovery: Proteomic Approaches for Development of DDS

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## ナノテクノロジーによる薬物輸送

# 薬物動態制御によるナノ治療

## 吉川友章 堤 康央12 中川晋作

#### Development of nanomedicine using intracellular DDS

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#### **Abstract**

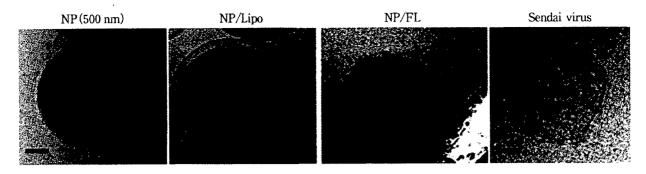
In recent years, sustained release and targeting system using nanospheres or microspheres is noticed in systemic pharmacokinetics. However, in the near future, not only "systemic pharmacokinetics" but also "intracellular pharmacokinetics" seems to be important in Drug Delivery System research. In this context, we have tried to develop the novel cytoplasmic nanoparticle (NP) delivery methods using fusogenic liposomes (FL) and protein transduction domain (PTD). In this study, we demonstrated that the FL efficiently delivered the encapsulated NP to the cytoplasm directly in a fusion—dependent. Oligonucleotides attached to NP were gradually released in the cytoplasm after its efficient delivery using FL. Furthermore, we have succeeded in identifying the novel PTD using phage displayed random peptide library. In near future, this novel PTDs are applied to cytoplasmic NP delivery carrier. From these results, we suggested that this technology is very important to control the intracellular pharmacokinetics, and can be also applied to any NP which will be produced by the nanotechnology in the future.

Key words: Drug Delivery System, nanotechnology, fusogenic liposome, protein transduction domain (PTD), phage display system

#### はじめに

ポストゲノム研究の中心的役割を担っている プロテオームやメタボローム研究, 更には細胞 機能の網羅的解析の進展に伴い, 疾病治療の標 的となり得る細胞内分子が続々と同定されるこ とが予測される. したがって, ポストゲノム時 代の薬物治療研究においては, これら細胞内分 子を標的とした治療薬の開発が急務となること が予想され、特にペプチドや蛋白質あるいは遺伝子などの生体内高分子を薬物としてとらえ、 それらを細胞内に導入して治療しようとするアプローチがますます脚光を浴びるようになるであろう.しかし、これら生体内高分子は従来までの低分子有機化合物などの薬物とは異なり、生体膜透過性が極端に悪く、細胞質内の特定のオルガネラに送達しないかぎり治療効果を得ることができない。すなわち、細胞内にある疾患

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☑ 1 Characterization of NP-Lipo and NP-FL
NP-FL were observed by Cryo-TEM. Bar is identical to 100 nm.

原因因子(遺伝子や蛋白質)を標的として、副作用を示すことなく最大の薬理効果を発揮させるためには、薬物としての核酸やペプチドなどを効率良く細胞内に導入する技術に加えて、細胞内においてそれら薬物濃度を維持するための徐放化や、標的オルガネラへのターゲティングなど、細胞内での薬物の動態を時空間的に制御する新しい Drug Delivery System (DDS) 技術の開発が必要となる.

そこで本稿では、著者らが試みている細胞内 DDS の確立に向けた研究の中でも、ナノ粒子 を応用した細胞内 DDS の開発に焦点を絞り、その成果を紹介したい。

生体レベルでは、マイクロメートルオーダー の薬物固定化微粒子を用いて薬物徐放による体 内薬物濃度の維持や標的指向化など、薬物の体 内動態を制御しようと試みられており、一部で は良好な成果が得られている. しかし, これを 細胞内というナノ空間において行おうと考えた 場合、'薬物担体の微小化(ナノオーダー化)'と '微粒子の細胞内導入法の開発'が必須である. 前者については、ナノテクノロジーの発展によ り、今後様々な優れた機能性ナノ粒子が開発さ れてくるであろう、しかしながら、これら機能 性ナノ粒子は、ほとんどの場合、エンドサイト ーシスを介して細胞内へ取り込まれるため、細 胞内ではエンドソーム膜に包まれた状態で存在 する、すなわち微粒子を用いて細胞内における 薬物動態を制御するためには、まず第一に微粒 子を細胞質内に導入するデリバリーシステムの 開発が必要不可欠である. このような背景の下

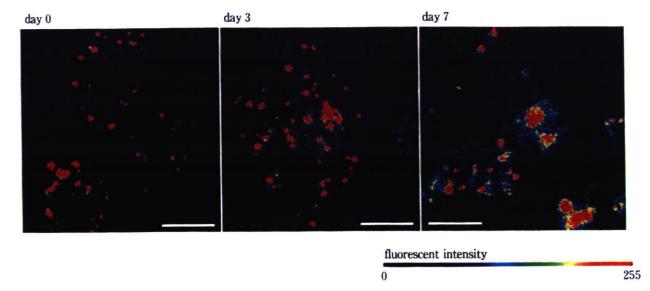
著者らは、細胞内という'ナノ空間'における薬物動態制御の開発を目的に、膜融合リポソーム (FL)や細胞内移行ペプチド(PTD)を応用した機能性ナノ粒子の細胞質内導入技術の開発を試みている。

# 1. 膜融合リポソーム(FL)を用いた細胞 質内ナノ粒子デリバリー技術の確立

膜融合リポソーム(FL)は、リポソームにセンダイウイルスの膜融合能を付与したバイオ・ナノ・キャリアである。既に著者らは、細胞膜との融合により、FL内に封入した遺伝子<sup>1-3)</sup>や機能性核酸<sup>4)</sup>、蛋白質<sup>5-8)</sup>、ペプチド<sup>5)</sup>などの高分子を細胞質内に直接導入できることを明らかにしている。したがって、高分子と同様、FL内にナノ粒子を封入することができれば、膜融合を介してナノ粒子をも細胞質内へ直接導入できると考えた。

# a. ナノ粒子封入膜融合リポソームの作製と 細胞内粒子導入(図 1)<sup>10</sup>

まず、モデルナノ粒子として緑色蛍光を発する直径 500 nm のナノ粒子 (molecular probe)を封入したFLを作製し、細胞質内への粒子導入について検討した、凍結乾燥空リポソーム法を用いて粒子径 500 nm のナノ粒子を封入したリポソームを作製し、そのリポソームを用いて FLを作製した. 作製したナノ粒子封入 FL(FL/NP)を透過型電子顕微鏡で観察したところ、リポソームおよび FLの内水相にナノ粒子が封入されており、更に FLの表面には、センダイウイルスと同様に細胞膜との融合にかかわるスパイク



☑ 2 Sustained release of oligonucleotides from NP introduced by FL

LLCMK2 cells were cultured with FL containing oligonucleotide-adsorbed NP for 30 min. Intracellular distribution of oligonucleotides were visualized by confocal microscopy on day 0, day 3, and day 7. Relative fluorescence intensities were represented by a 256-color spectrum. Bars indicate  $20\,\mu\text{m}$ .

状の膜蛋白が存在していることが確認された<sup>10</sup>. このFL/NPによる細胞内へのナノ粒子導入活性をFACS法により検討した結果,作用させた細胞の90%以上にナノ粒子の導入が認められた. 更に蛍光強度から細胞内に導入されたナノ粒子数を算定したところ,1細胞当たり平均約10個,更に26個以上導入されている細胞群も約5%以上存在した.一方,ナノ粒子単独やナノ粒子を封入した通常のリポソーム(NP/Lipo)を作用させた細胞においては,ナノ粒子の取り込みはほとんど確認されなかった. 以上の結果より,FLは内封したナノ粒子を細胞内に効率よく導入できることが示された.

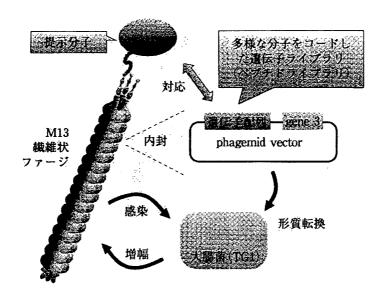
# b. FLを用いた細胞内薬物徐放化 システムの開発

次に薬物固定化ナノ粒子をFLを用いて細胞内に導入し、細胞内における薬物徐放について検討した。モデル薬物として蛍光標識したオリゴヌクレオチド(ODN)を粒子表面がカチオン性のポリビニルアミンナノ粒子に吸着させ、FLを用いて細胞質内に導入した。細胞質内でのオリゴヌクレオチドの局在を共焦点レーザー顕微鏡にて評価した結果、細胞質内に導入されたナノ粒子から経日的にオリゴヌクレオチドが

細胞質内へ徐々に放出されている蛍光像が観察された(図2).以上の結果より、FLを用いて薬物徐放性ナノ粒子を細胞質内に直接導入することで、細胞内において薬物を徐放させることが可能であることが示唆された。今後ナノテクノロジーの発展に伴って、温度・熱などの刺激、あるいは細胞内環境変化に応答するような、機能性ナノ粒子が続々と開発されることが予測される。FLによるナノ粒子の細胞質内直接導入法はこれら新規ナノ粒子にも適用可能な汎用性の高い方法論であり、各種ナノ粒子と組み合わせることでより有効性の高い薬物治療が達成できるものと期待される。

# 2. 細胞内 DDS の実現にかなう 新規ペプチド性キャリアの探索

近年、HIV由来のTATペプチドといった protein transduction domain (PTD) が細胞膜を 透過する活性を有することが明らかとなり、新 規の細胞内物質導入キャリアとして注目されている。PTD の細胞内侵入機構の詳細は明らかではないが、細胞内に取り込まれた後に細胞質内へと移行することが報告され<sup>11,12)</sup>、PTD をリポソームや磁性ナノ粒子に結合させることで、粒



☑ 3 Phage displayed random peptide library

子状の物質をも細胞内へ導入可能であることが 報告されている13.14). これらの報告を踏まえる と、PTD は FLと同様に様々な機能性ナノ粒子 を細胞質内へ導入するにあたり、優れたツール になる可能性が高い. しかし、PTDを用いた微 粒子導入の成功例はごくわずかであり、また細 胞特異性や細胞内移行活性において十分とは言 いきれないのが現状である。そのため、優れた PTD の開発を目指して、現在世界的に PTD の 立体構造解析に基づいたアナログ作製や細胞へ の吸着性向上を目的としたカチオン性アミノ酸 導入体の作製が、ペプチド合成法によりトライ ・アンド・エラーで進められている. しかしな がら、これらの方法は膨大な時間、労力を費や すばかりか、作製可能なペプチドの多様性(種 類)にも限界があるなど、期待通りのPTDはほ とんど得られていない.

以上の背景から著者らは、ファージ表面提示 法を駆使することで、その細胞親和性・特異性 や細胞内移行性といった機能をハイスループッ ト解析できるテクノロジーの開発を試みている.

# a. ランダムペプチド提示ファージ ライブラリの構築

近年、ファージ表面提示法は、ターゲット (分子・粒子・細胞)に親和性を有する蛋白質や ペプチドを網羅的かつ迅速に探索し得る技術と して広く用いられるようになってきた<sup>15-19</sup>.こ

のファージ表面提示法の特徴は、①ファージ 外殼蛋白質遺伝子の5′末端領域に、任意の外来 遺伝子を組み込んだファージミドベクターを構 築することにより、その外来遺伝子産物をター ゲットと相互作用可能な状態でファージ表面に 提示できること、②個々のファージ粒子は、遺 伝型(ファージ粒子に内封されている外来遺伝 子)と表現型(ファージ表面に提示された蛋白 質)が一致していること(1個の宿主菌に1個の ファージしか感染しないことによる)、③多様 な外来遺伝子産物を表面提示したファージを数 十億種類以上のレパートリーを有するライブラ リとして容易に調製できること、④宿主菌に 感染させることで簡便にファージを増幅できる ことにある。そのため、ランダムペプチドやナ イーブ抗体などをファージ表面に提示させたフ ァージライブラリを短期間(約1週間)で構築で きる. 更に、これらのライブラリの中から、タ ーゲット分子と親和性を有するファージを回収 し、増幅するという一連の操作(パンニング)を 繰り返すことにより、標的分子に対して高親和 性の分子を表面提示したファージのみを濃縮・ 選択できる。しかも得られたファージは提示し ている分子をコードする遺伝子を内封している ため、当該分子の遺伝子配列情報をも同時に得 ることができるという利点を有している(図3). そこで著者らは、新規 PTD の創製を目的に、