（資料 1.）

平成 18 年度　総括研究報告書

研究成果に関する一覧表およびその刊行物

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総括研究報告書

筋萎縮性側索硬化症に対する肝細胞増殖因子を用いた画期的治療法の開発

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研究要旨：本研究の目的は神経難病でも最も苛酷な筋萎縮性側索硬化症（ALS）に対して肝細胞増殖因子（HGF）を用いた画期的治療法を開発することとそれに関わる基盤研究を進めることにある。ALSの病因研究および治療研究には変異Cu/Zn superoxide dismutase（SOD1）遺伝子導入ALSラットが重要な役割を果している。私共はこのALSラットを用いて運動ニューロンに対し神経栄養因子作用を有するヒトリコンビナント Hepatocyte Growth Factor（HGF）の髄腔内持続投与でALSに対する有効性を示してきた。一方、抗HGF抗体をALSラットの髄腔内へ投与しHGFを中和させると病態を悪化させることを確認し、内因性HGF-c-Met機構がALS病態の進行を抑止する重要な因子である可能性が明らかになった。外来性HGFの供給は生理的なHGFの病態進行抑制作用を強化するという点でヒトALSに対する理論的かつ有力な新規治療法になり得ると考えられる。この事実は今後のALSへのHGF治療の臨床応用について大きなステップと考えられる。新規治療法開発の次なる段階としては、齧歯類に比較してヒトにより近い霊長類におけるHGF投与の安全試験が必要であり、現在進行中である。

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A. 研究目的

筋萎縮性側索硬化症（ALS）は運動ニューロンの選択的な細胞死が惹起されて、全身の筋萎縮と脱力が進行する原因不明の難治性神経筋疾患である。しかも2〜3年の経過で呼吸筋の麻痺をきたす極めて予後不良な疾患であるが、現状では有効な治療法がない。ALSの病因と病態の解明を行ない、それを基盤にした新規治療法の開発が世界的に切望されている。

わが国で発見された神経栄養因子である肝細胞増殖因子（Hepatocyte Growth Factor、以下HGF）は、運動ニューロンに対する強力な保護作用が知られており、私たちは遺伝子工学的にALSマウスにおけるHGFの運動ニューロン死に対する抑制効果を確認している。さらにはALSの臨床応用を目指し、私たちが開発した大型ALS動物モデルである変異Cu/Zn superoxide dismutase（SOD1）導入ALSラットに対

して HGF 蛋白の髄腔内投与実験を行い、その有効性も確認している。今回は内因性 HGF の ALS 病態における役割およびその投与の安全性に関する検討を中心に行った。

B. 研究方法

ALS の新規治療法の開発を目指し ALS 病態における内因性 HGF の役割およびその投与の安全性に関する検討するために、以下の研究を行う。

1) 抗 HGF 抗体の髄腔内投与による ALS ラット病態進行の促進およびその機序の解明

東北大学神経内科で確立した G93A 変異 SOD1 トランスジェニックラットと正常同腹仔ラット腰髄の内因性ラット HGF レベルを酵素免疫測定法で明らかにした。その結果をもとに同トランスジェニックラットを対象に内因性 HGF が誘導されてくる週齢から 4 週間、皮下に留置した浸透圧ポンプよりウサギポリクローナル抗ラット HGF 特異抗体を 5 μg/体重(g) 髄腔内に持続投与した。コントロールとしては同量の正常ウサギ IgG を投与した。ラットは注意深く連日観察し発症日、死亡日を特定した。死亡時の腰髄灌流固定凍結切片にて病理的な検討も行った。

さらには同抗ラット HGF 特異抗体２週間投与で、腰髄灌流固定凍結切片を作製し、前角細胞数および病理像の確認を行った。また蛍光免疫組織化学にて、リン酸化 Akt、リン酸化 c-Met の発現とグリア細胞、ユビキチン（Ub）陽性像について半定量的に解析した。

2）HGF の安全な投与法確立に向けて、ALS モデル動物における c-Met/HGF 受容体のリン酸化の検討

G93A 変異 SOD1 トランスジェニックマウスと中枢神経系内に HGF を過剰発現する HGF 遺伝子導入マウスの交配実験（ダブルトランスジェニックマウスの作製）により、c-Met 活性化の評価、c-Met 膜近傍領域にあるセリン残基特異的抗体を用いた解析および脱リン酸化酵素群の発現調節についての検討を行った。

3) HGF/活性型リン酸化 c-Met システムに基づいた ALS 病態における一過性組織変性からの回復機構の解明

G93A 変異 SOD1 トランスジェニックマウスにおける脊髄、肝臓、腎臓、心臓の各臓器における経時的解析を行と共に、HGF およびリン酸化 c-Met の発現の免疫組織化学的検討を行う。

（倫理面への配慮）

すべての遺伝子操作は本学 DNA 組換え実験指針に従い、また動物実験は同動物実験指針に従った上で動物愛護面に配慮しかつ利用動物数を極力減らすように務めた。

C 及び D. 研究結果及び考察

1) 抗 HGF 抗体の髄腔内投与による ALS ラット病態進行の促進およびその機序の解明

トランスジェニックラット腰髄では正常同腹仔の野生型群に比して内因性 HGF の誘導が発症前（約 14 週齢）より認められた。コントロール群に比して抗 HGF 抗体投与群では、より早期に発症する傾向より早期の死亡が認められた。抗 HGF 抗体投与群の死亡時病理学的所見では、脊髄前角ニューロンの著明な脱落と著しいミクログリア、

アストロサイト増生を認め、コントロール群と同様であった。

一方、抗体投与2週間での検討では、抗HGF抗体投与群の腰髄前角では前角細胞脱落の促進傾向に加え、リン酸化Akt陽性細胞の有意な減少とミクログリア、アストログリア、Ub陽性凝集体の有意な増加を認めた。リン酸化c-Metは残存前角細胞と活性化アストログリアの一部に共陽性像を認めた。

本ALSモデルラットにおいて運動ニューロン脱落とともに誘導されてくる内因性のラットHGFを抗HGF抗体の髄腔内投与によって中和すると、病態が悪化することが明らかとなった。すなわち、抗HGF抗体投与はALS様病態の進行を促進したと考えられた。このことから、HGFがALS様病態の進行を遅らせている重要な生理的抑制因子であることが示唆される。

Katoらは、変異SOD1関連家族性ALSだけでなくヒト孤発性ALSにおいても剖検脊髄の残存運動ニューロンにHGFとその受容体c-Metの発現を報告しており、ヒトALSにおけるHGFの重要性を示唆している。本研究からも内因性HGF-c-Met機構がALS様病態の進行を抑止する重要な因子である可能性が示唆された。

以上より、外来性HGFの供給は生理的なHGFの病態進行抑制作用を強化するという点でヒトALSに対する理論的かつ有力な新規治療法になり得ると考えられる。

2）HGFの安全な投与法確立に向けて、ALSモデル動物におけるc-Met/HGF受容体のリン酸化の検討

ALSトランスジェニックマウスおよびALS/HGFトランスジェニックマウスにおいてc-Metは共にチロシン残基のリン酸化を受けていた。その一方でコントロール（野生型）マウスではチロシン残基のリン酸化はほとんど認めなかった。

c-Met膜近傍領域にあるセリン残基特異的抗体およびフォスファターゼ抗体による検討では神経細胞がALSに罹患しているか否かでその発現が調整されていることが明らかになった。このことはHGFを供給した際にALSに罹患していない（不必要な）細胞にシグナルを入れなくてすむ意味で安全な投与に有利であると考えられた。

3）HGF/活性型リン酸化c-Metシステムに基づいたALS病態における一過性組織変性からの回復機構の解明

SOD1トランスジェニックマウスにおいては変異SOD1ストレスにより脊髄前角細胞は変性し、最終的には死にいたる。その過程において内因性生存機構としてHGF/活性型リン酸化c-Metシステムのup-regulation機構を惹起させ自らを守って生存し続けようとするが、この機構を振り切るかたちで死にいたる。その一方で、肝臓、腎臓、心臓においては、一度は脊髄前角細胞と同様な変性組織像を呈するものの、最終的にはほぼ完全に組織学的回復を呈する。この組織学的完全回復機構のひとつに内因性生存機構としてのHGF/活性型リン酸化c-Metシステムのup-regulation機構が明らかになった。

E. 結論

本研究の目的は神経難病でも最も苛酷な筋萎縮性側索硬化症（ALS）に対して肝細胞増殖因子（HGF）を用いた画期的治療法

を開発することとそれに関わる基盤研究を進めることにある。ALS の病因として最も重要視されている変異 SOD1 による選択的運動ニューロン死のメカニズムはまだ十分明らかにされていないが、変異 SOD1 導入による ALS トランスジェニックラットは病因・治療研究に極めて有用なモデルである。

本 ALS モデルラットにおいて運動ニューロン脱落とともに誘導されてくる内因性のラット HGF を抗 HGF 抗体の髄腔内投与によって中和すると、病態が悪化することが明らかとなった。すなわち、抗 HGF 抗体投与は ALS 様病態の進行を促進したと考えられた。このことから、HGF が ALS 様病態の進行を遅らせている重要な生理的抑制因子であることが示唆される。

また他の臓器における SOD1 ストレスに対する反応の解析からも内因性 HGF-c-Met 機構が ALS 様病態の進行を抑止する重要な因子である可能性が示唆された。

以上より、外来性 HGF の供給は生理的な HGF の病態進行抑制作用を強化するという点でヒト ALS に対する理論的かつ有力な新規治療法になり得ると考えられる。HGF による新規治療法開発の次なる段階としては、齧歯類よりヒトに近い霊長類における HGF 投与の安全性試験が必要であり、ヒトの臨床試験に向けて今後の研究進展が期待される。

F. 健康危険情報

特になし

G. 研究発表

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H. 知的財産権の出願・登録状況

1. 特許登録

ラットを用いた ALS モデル（出願済）

2. 実用新案登録

なし

3. その他

なし

研究成果の刊行に関する一覧

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Alteration of familial ALS-linked mutant SOD1 solubility with disease progression: Its modulation by the proteasome and Hsp70

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Abstract

Accumulation of misfolded Cu/Zn superoxide dismutase (SOD1) occurs in patients with a subgroup of familial amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (fALS). To identify the conversion of SOD1 from a normally soluble form to insoluble aggregates, we investigated the change of SOD1 solubility with aging in fALS-linked H46R SOD1 transgenic mice. Mutant SOD1 specifically altered to insoluble forms, which were sequentially separated into Triton X-100-insoluble/sodium dodecyl sulfate (SDS)-soluble and SDS-insoluble/formic acid-soluble species. In spinal cords, the levels of SDS-dissociable soluble SOD1 monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers were significantly elevated before motor dysfunction onset. In COS-7 cells expressing H46R SOD1, treatment with proteasome inhibitors recapitulated the alteration of SOD1 solubility in transgenic mice. In contrast, overexpression of Hsp70 reduced accumulation of mutant-specific insoluble SOD1. SDS-soluble low molecular weight species of H46R SOD1 may appear as early misfolded intermediates when their concentration exceeds the capacity of the proteasome and molecular chaperones.

Keywords: Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis; Cu/Zn superoxide dismutase; Heat shock protein; Proteasome; Oligomer

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) is a neurodegenerative disorder characterized by the degeneration of both upper and lower motor neurons, leading to progressive paralysis. Of all ALS cases, ~90% are sporadic and ~10% are familial; ~20% of familial ALS (fALS) cases are associated with dominantly inherited mutations in the gene encoding Cu/Zn superoxide dismutase (SOD1) [1–3]. SOD1 is a major antioxidant enzyme located predominantly in the cytosol, nucleus, and mitochondrial intermembrane space of eukaryotic cells [4]. The biological active enzyme forms a 32-kDa homodimer and contains one copper-binding site and one zinc-binding site, as well as a disulfide bond in each of its two subunits. SOD1-linked fALS was initially suspected to result from oxidative damage caused by diminished SOD1 activity, but SOD1-null mice show no motor neuron disease [5], and transgenic mice overexpressing human mutant SOD1 have a phenotype that is closely similar to patients with fALS, irrespective of their normal or elevated levels of SOD1 activity [6–9]. This evidence indicates that SOD1-linked fALS occurs due to a toxic gain-of-function of mutant SOD1 but not due to a lowering of its activity [6].

Deposition of proteinaceous inclusions of SOD1 in motor neurons is a characteristic hallmark of patients with fALS [10–12]. Cellular and animal models have shown that overexpression of mutant SOD1 can cause loss of motor

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neurons with the formation of SOD1-positive inclusions [12–15] and high-molecular-weight (HMW) SOD1 complexes [12,16–19], supporting the hypothesis that the abnormal accumulation of SOD1 aggregates may play a role in the pathogenesis of fALS. Concerning the formation of SOD1 aggregates, several reports have described a close association with the proteasome and heat shock proteins (Hsps). In cells overexpressing mutant SOD1, inhibition of the proteasome activity resulted in the accumulation of insoluble SOD1 protein and the formation of HMW insoluble complexes [16,17,19–22]. On the other hand, Bruening et al. [23] reported that overexpression of Hsp70 reduced aggregate formation and prolonged cellular viability in cells expressing mutant SOD1. These data imply that the conversion of SOD1 from an inherently soluble form to an aggregated species is promoted by insufficiency of the proteasome and/or molecular chaperones, which suppress the accumulation of misfolded proteins. However, the formation of protein aggregation is a complex process, which contains several kinds of misfolded intermediates to form amorphous aggregates and fibrils [24]. There is only a little basic information on how mutant SOD1 undergoes the complex process in relation to the system of proteasome and Hsps.

In the present study, we investigated the alteration of SOD1 solubility with aging in fALS-linked mutant H46R SOD1 transgenic mice. We also examined its change in mutant SOD1 expressed cells by treatment with proteasome inhibitors. Furthermore, using cells co-expressing mutant SOD1 and Hsp70, we characterized an insoluble SOD1 species influenced by Hsp70 as misfolded proteins. Here we show that SDS-dissociable soluble monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers of H46R SOD1 appear as early misfolded intermediates in the formation of highly insoluble aggregates, and their levels are coordinately mediated by the proteasome activity and Hsp function.

Materials and methods

Materials. We used the following antibodies: polyclonal human SOD1 antibody (SOD1-100, diluted 0.1 μg/ml, Victoria, BC, Canada); monoclonal antibody against GST-fused full-length human SOD1 protein that specifically binds to human SOD1 (diluted 0.2 μg/ml, MBL, Nagoya, Japan); polyclonal Hsp70 antibody (SPA-757, diluted 1:30,000 for Western blotting, diluted 1:1000 for immunohistochemistry, Stressgen); polyclonal Hsp40 antibody (SPA-400 diluted 1:10,000 for Western blotting, diluted 1:500 for immunohistochemistry, Stressgen). Wild-type SOD1 cDNA fused with an FLAG tag at C-terminus of SOD1 (SOD1-FLAG) was subcloned into either pcDNA3.1 (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA, USA) or pEF-BOS vector [20]. Mutant H46R and G93A SOD1 cDNAs were generated by site-directed mutagenesis, and their sequences were confirmed by DNA sequencing. pCMV-Hsp70 and pRC-Hsp40 were described previously [25,26].

Cell culture and transfection. COS-7 and SH-SY5Y cells were grown in Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium (DMEM, Invitrogen) and a mixture of DMEM and Ham's F-12, respectively, supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum. SOD1 cDNAs were transfected into cells using Lipofectamine Plus reagents (Invitrogen), according to the manufacturer's protocols [27]. Cultured cells were harvested 48 h after transfection for experiments. For inhibition of the proteasome activity, either MG132 or lactacystin (Sigma, St. Louis, MO, USA) in indicated concentrations was added to cells 24 h after transfection and then cells were further incubated for 24 h. In experiments using Hsp chaperones, either Hsp70 or Hsp40 cDNA was co-transfected with H46R SOD1-FLAG pEF-BOS to COS-7 cells (at a molar ratio of 4:1).

Transgenic mice. Transgenic mouse lines expressing fALS-linked H46R SOD1 under the control of inherent human SOD1 promoter were maintained as hemizygotes by mating with B6/SJF1 as previously described [28]. The transgenic mice expressing wild-type human SOD1 were also kindly supplied by Dr. PH. Chan (Stanford University, Stanford, CA, USA) and maintained as hemizygotes [29]. All of the mouse experiments followed the Guidelines for Animal Experiments of Yamagata University School of Medicine.

Protein fractionation and Western blotting. Protein fractionation of whole mouse spinal cords was performed according to published protocols [30,31] with a slight modification (see Fig. 1A). Whole mouse spinal cords were homogenized by 15 up-and-down strokes with a Teflon homogenizer in 1:3 (wt/vol) phosphate-buffered saline (PBS; 100 mM phosphate, pH 7.4, 150 mM NaCl, and protease inhibitor cocktail (Roche Diagnostics, Mannheim, Germany)). The homogenate was centrifuged at 100,000×*g* for 20 min at 4 °C, and the resultant supernatant was collected as the PBS-soluble fraction. The pellet was rinsed three times with PBS and was extracted by sonication in 1% Triton X-100 (TX)/PBS. After centrifugation at 100,000×*g* for 20 min at 4 °C, the supernatant was designated as the TX-soluble fraction. The pellet was washed three times with 1% TX/PBS and extracted by sonication in 5% SDS/PBS. The extract was incubated at room temperature for 30 min and centrifuged at 100,000×*g* for 20 min at 20 °C. The supernatant was designated as the SDS-soluble fraction. After rinsing and centrifugating three times in 5% SDS/PBS, the resultant pellet was extracted by sonication in 8 M urea/PBS. After centrifugation at 100,000×*g* for 20 min at 20 °C, the supernatant was designated as the urea-soluble fraction. The pellet was rinsed once with 8 M urea/PBS and extracted by sonication in 88% formic acid (FA). After centrifugation at 100,000×*g* for 20 min at 20 °C, the supernatant was designated as the FA-soluble fraction. FA was evaporated by SpeedVac (Savant, Farmingdale, NY, USA). After washing the dried pellet with distilled water and lyophilizing it again, the resulting pellet was resuspended by sonication in Laemmli's sample buffer containing 2% SDS and 100 mM dithiothreitol and then boiled for 5 min. The protein concentrations of the PBS-soluble, TX-soluble, SDS-soluble, and urea-soluble fractions were measured by a BCA protein assay (Pierce, Rockford, IL, USA). Cultured cell pellets were fractionated by the same protocol described above until the preparation of the SDS-soluble fraction. The SDS-insoluble pellet was resuspended by sonication in Laemmli's sample buffer and boiled for 5 min. The suspension was designated as the SDS-insoluble fraction.

We performed Western blotting as described previously [27]. All protein samples were boiled for 5 min in Laemmli's sample buffer containing 100 mM dithiothreitol. Ten micrograms of protein from each of the PBS-soluble, TX-soluble, SDS-soluble, and urea-soluble fractions, and equal aliquots of the FA-soluble fraction were loaded on 15% polyacrylamide gels. The relative intensities of detected bands were scanned and quantified with the Scion image program, version 4.02 (Scion Corp., Frederick, MD, USA). Statistical analysis for comparison of groups was performed by ANOVA with Fisher's probability of least significant difference (PLSD) post hoc test for significance using the Statview software version 5 (SAS Institute Inc, Cary, NC, USA).

Immunohistochemistry. The mice, anesthetized with diethyl ether, were sacrificed by transcardial perfusion with 0.9% sodium chloride followed by 4% paraformaldehyde in PBS. The spinal cord was quickly removed, post-fixed with the above solution, and then embedded in paraffin. After deparaffinizing, sections (4-μm thickness) of the lumbar spinal cord (L_{4-5}) were incubated with 0.3% hydrogen peroxide for 10 min and then with 10% normal goat serum for 30 min. The sections were incubated with the primary antibodies, and they reacted with the appropriate biotinylated secondary antibodies, followed by an avidin-biotin-peroxidase complex (Vector, Burlingame, CA, USA). Color was developed with diaminobenzidine (Sigma).

Results

Mutant-specific alteration of SOD1 solubility in fALS-linked H46R SOD1 transgenic mice

In this study, we used fALS-linked H46R SOD1 transgenic mice as reported previously [28]. To examine the fALS-linked mutation-dependent change of SOD1 solubility, we sequentially extracted spinal cords of mutant transgenic mice with severe motor impairment (~24 weeks of age) with PBS, 1% TX, 5% SDS, 8 M urea, and 88% FA (Fig. 1A), and then separated extracts by SDS–PAGE under the denaturing condition. In 24-week-old non-transgenic littermates and 38-week-old wild-type SOD1

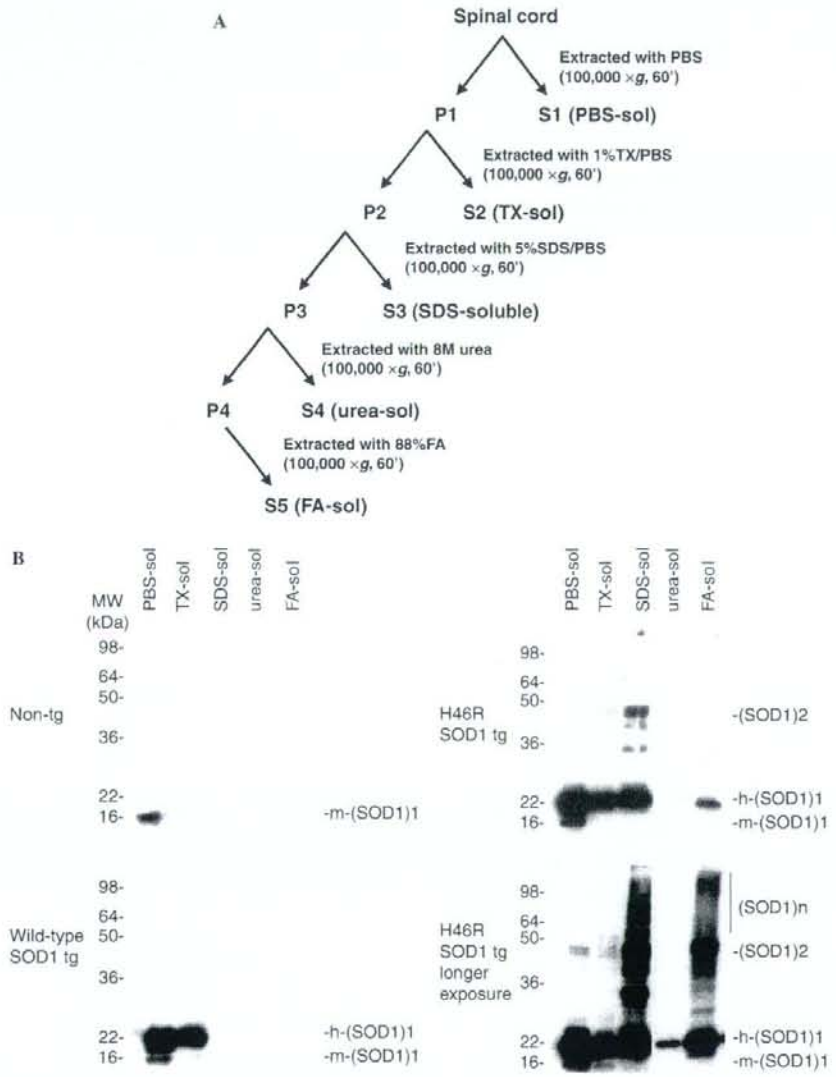

Fig. 1. Mutant-specific alteration of SOD1 solubility in spinal cords from fALS-linked H46R SOD1 transgenic mice. (A) Schematic representation of the sequential extraction steps. (B) Western blot analysis of spinal cords from 24-week-old non-transgenic mice (Non-tg) (upper left panel), 38-week-old wild-type SOD1 transgenic mice (Wild-type SOD1 tg) (lower left panel), and mutant H46R SOD1 transgenic mice at end stage (H46R SOD1 tg) (upper right panel). Ten micrograms of protein from each of the PBS-soluble fraction (PBS-sol), the TX-soluble fraction (TX-sol), the SDS-soluble fraction (SDS-sol), and the urea-soluble fraction (urea-sol) and equal aliquots of the FA-soluble fraction (FA-sol) were subjected to 15% polyacrylamide gels under reducing conditions. Western blots were probed with SOD1-100 antibody, which recognizes both human SOD1 (h-SOD1) and mouse endogenous SOD1 (m-SOD1). The lower right panel (identical to the upper right panel) was exposed to the film for a longer time.

transgenic mice, endogenous mouse SOD1, and wild-type human SOD1 were detected as monomers migrating at 16-kDa and 22-kDa, respectively, in the PBS- and 1% TX-soluble fractions (Fig. 1B). This finding may be explained by the fact that normal SOD1 is a soluble protein located predominantly in the cytosol and less within the membranous organelle such as mitochondrial intermembrane space [4]. In contrast to the control mouse SDS-soluble fraction that was virtually devoid of SOD1, intense bands of SOD1 were found in the SDS-soluble fraction of mutant transgenic mice (Fig. 1B). In the fraction, the anti-SOD1 antibody (SOD1-100) recognized 22-kDa bands ((SOD1)1; it represents SOD1 monomer), ~44-kDa bands ((SOD1)2; apparent molecular weight of (SOD1)2 shows 2-fold to 22-kDa monomer, being consistent with SOD1 dimer as previously reported [19]), and multiple bands above 44-kDa ((SOD1)n; it represents high-molecular-weight (HMW) species). Also, ~28 and ~36-kDa bands were observed in the SDS-soluble fraction. These bands may represent proteolytic fragments from HMW species, but the exact origin was unknown in this study. SOD1 monomers, dimers, and HMW species were further recovered in the FA-soluble fraction, whereas a small amount of monomeric SOD1, but not HMW species, was detected in the urea-soluble fraction, indicating that FA-soluble SOD1 species were not simply carried over from the prior urea extracts (Fig. 1B). TX-insoluble/SDS-soluble (designated as SDS-soluble) species are characterized by an alteration of solubility to distinguish mutant H46R SOD1 from a wild-type one. Also, mutant H46R SOD1 contained SDS-stable oligomers with diverse solubility in detergents or denaturants.

Age-dependent alteration of SOD1 solubility in H46R SOD1 transgenic mice

As described in our previous report, the H46R SOD1 transgenic mice showed motor dysfunction with aging, and the stages of motor dysfunction could be classified into four time periods based on the Rotarod test: 13 weeks, 17 weeks, 21 weeks, and later 23 weeks of age were designated as the early presymptomatic stage (EP), late presymptomatic stage (LP), symptomatic stage (SS), and end stage (ES), respectively [28]. To clarify the alteration of SOD1 solubility with aging in mutant SOD1 transgenic mice, we compared the levels of SOD1 species, which were biochemically fractionated as described above, in the different stages (Figs. 2A and B). The levels of both PBS-soluble and TX-soluble SOD1 monomers showed no statistically significant difference between stages, although they had a tendency to decrease with aging (Figs. 2A and B). In the SDS-soluble fraction, mutant SOD1 monomers and dimers were clearly detected at EP. The ratios of SOD1 monomers at EP and LP versus ES were $20.52 \pm 6.41\%$ (mean $\pm$ SD) and $45.88 \pm 2.30\%$, respectively. In addition, the ratios of SOD1 dimers at EP and LP versus ES were $29.38 \pm 21.20\%$ and $68.47 \pm 10.27\%$, respectively. On the other hand, the levels of SOD1 HMW species showed the later elevation at the period between LP and SS. These findings indicate that the increase of SDS-dissociable soluble SOD1 monomers and SDS-stable soluble SOD1 dimers occurred between EP and LP before onset ($n = 3$, $p = 0.017$ and $p = 0.005$, respectively) (Fig. 2B). In the FA-soluble fraction, a small number of SOD1 monomers were also seen at EP, but there was no significant difference in the levels of monomers between EP and LP. The ratios of SOD1 monomers at LP and SS versus ES were $32.31 \pm 12.99\%$ and $68.30 \pm 17.03\%$, respectively. The ratios of SOD1 dimers at LP and SS versus ES were $12.73 \pm 6.27\%$ and $41.42 \pm 4.50\%$, respectively. The levels of FA-soluble SOD1 monomers and FA-soluble dimers significantly increased between LP and SS ($p = 0.036$ and $p < 0.001$, respectively), while the levels of FA-soluble SOD1 HMW species elevated later in the period between SS and ES (Figs. 2A and B). The levels of SDS-dissociable soluble monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers elevated earlier than the SDS-stable soluble HMW species and FA-soluble species.

To examine the relation between the alteration of SOD1 solubility and the formation of SOD1-inclusions with aging, we immunostained mouse spinal cords in four different stages with monoclonal anti-SOD1 antibody (Fig. 2C). At EP, we did not detect any kind of SOD1-inclusions. SOD1-inclusions in the neuropil appeared at SS, and the number of SOD1-inclusions increased between SS and ES (Fig. 2C). SOD1-inclusions increased after disease onset, indicating that the accumulation of SDS-dissociable soluble SOD1 monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers precedes the appearance of SOD1-inclusions.

The increase of Hsp70/40 in the SDS-soluble fraction with aging in H46R SOD1 transgenic mice

To examine how the mutant-specific alteration of SDS solubility is associated with the molecular chaperone system, the fractionated samples prepared above were analyzed by Western blotting using antibodies to Hsp70 and Hsp40. Hsp70 and Hsp40 were found to be rich in the PBS-soluble and the TX-soluble fractions (Fig. 3A). PBS- and TX-soluble Hsp70 and Hsp40 showed constant levels in all stages of mutant transgenic mice and were not different from those in 24-week-old non-transgenic littermates and 38-week-old wild-type SOD1 transgenic mice (Fig. 3A). In the SDS-soluble fraction, the levels of Hsp70 and Hsp40 in mutant transgenic mice at LP were higher than those in the control mice at later 24 weeks of age. The levels of Hsp70 and Hsp40 in the SDS-soluble fractions elevated at the period between EP and LP in mutant transgenic mice (Fig. 3A). To clarify how the increase of Hsp70 and Hsp40 in the SDS-soluble fraction reflects in histopathological change with aging, we immunostained the lumbar spinal cords with antibodies to Hsp70 and Hsp40 (Fig. 3B). SOD1-positive inclusions were intensely stained with the antibody to Hsp70 as previously reported and faintly reacted with the antibody to Hsp40 in

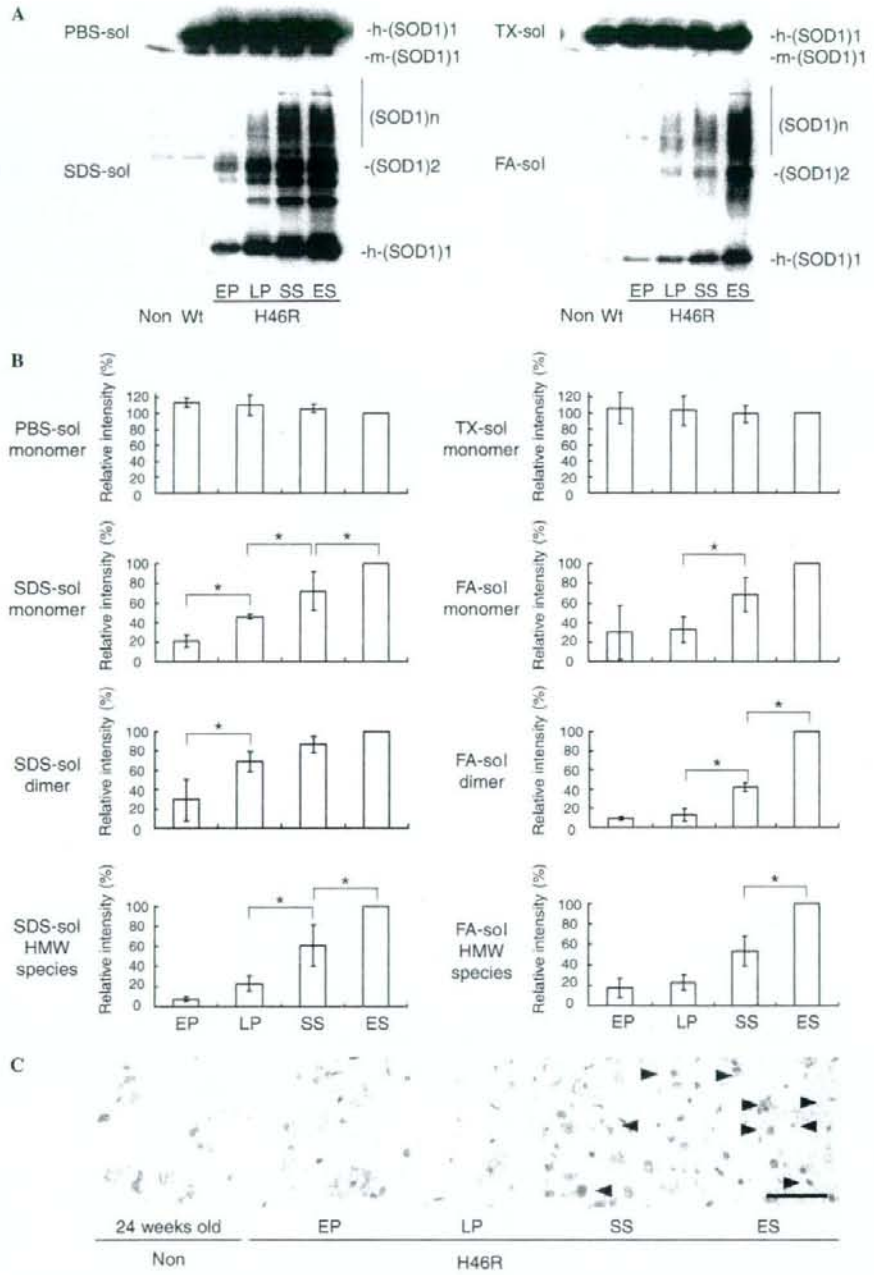

Fig. 2. Age-dependent alteration of SOD1 in spinal cords from H46R SOD1 transgenic mice. (A) The spinal cords of 24-week-old non-transgenic littermates (Non), 38-week-old wild-type SOD1 transgenic mice (Wt), and H46R SOD1 transgenic mice (H46R) at early presymptomatic stage (EP), late presymptomatic stage (LP), symptomatic stage (SS), and end stage (ES) were sequentially fractionated. Ten micrograms of protein from each of the PBS-soluble fraction (PBS-sol), the TX-soluble fraction (TX-sol), and the SDS-soluble fraction (SDS-sol), and equal aliquots of the FA-soluble fraction (FA-sol) were loaded on the gel and then immunoblotted with SOD1-100 antibody. (B) The graphs represent relative intensities of H46R SOD1 species at each stage ($n = 3$, bars represent mean ± SD, $^{*}P < 0.05$). (C) Immunohistochemical analysis of lumbar spinal cords (L_{4-5}) of 24-week-old non-transgenic littermates (Non) and H46R SOD1 transgenic mice (H46R) at four stages. These sections were immunostained with monoclonal anti-SOD1 antibody specific to human SOD1. Scale bars = 50 μm. Arrowheads indicate SOD1-immunoreactive structures.

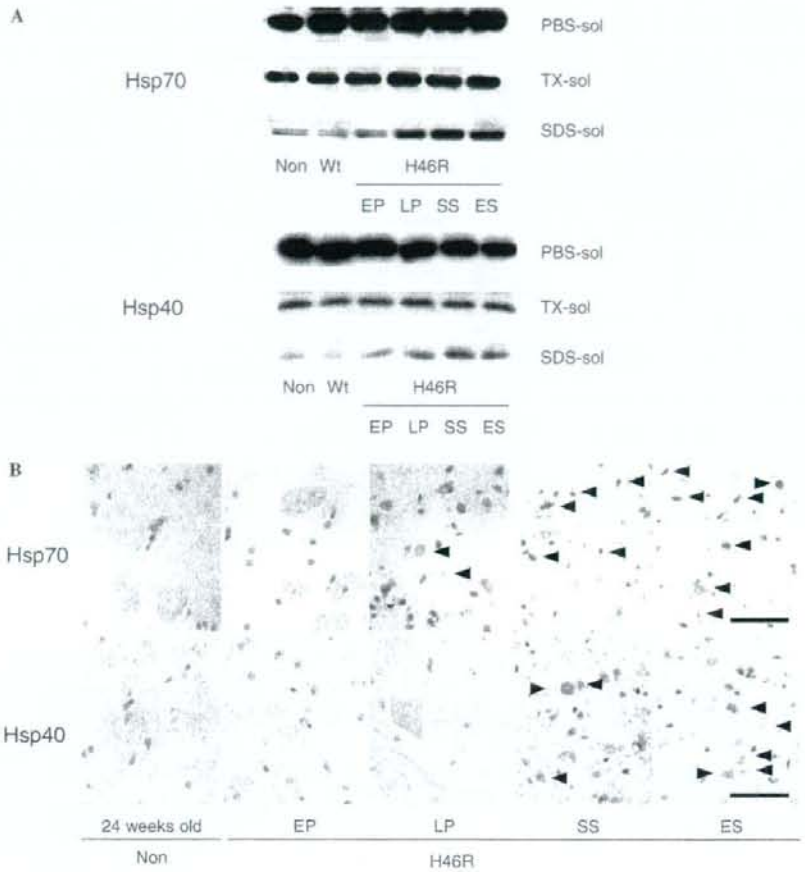

Fig. 3. (A) Increase of Hsp70 and Hsp40 in the SDS-soluble fraction from H46R SOD1 transgenic mice. The fractionated samples used in Fig. 2 were analyzed by Western blotting using anti-Hsp70 and anti-Hsp40 antibodies. Ten micrograms of total protein from each fraction was loaded on each lane. (B) Time course analysis of Hsp-immunoreactive structures. These sections were immunostained with anti-Hsp70 antibody and anti-Hsp40 antibody. Scale bars = 50 μm. Arrowheads indicate immunoreactive structures of each antibody.

the serial sections (data not shown). Although a small number of Hsp70-positive structures were found in neuropil at LP, the increase of SOD1-inclusions containing Hsp70 immunoreactivities was remarkable after SS (Fig. 3B). Similarly, Hsp40-positive structures increased from SS (Fig. 3B). The present data showed that the increase of Hsp70 and Hsp40 in the SDS-soluble fraction appeared along with the increase of SDS-dissociable soluble SOD1 monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers. This increase of Hsp70 and Hsp40 occurred before the accumulation of visible inclusions with Hsp70 and Hsp40 immunoreactivities.

Inhibition of the proteasome activity promotes the change of SOD1 solubility in cells expressing H46R SOD1

The fALS-linked mutant misfolded SOD1 protein is reported to be degraded by the proteasome pathway [16,17,19,20]. To see how inhibition of the proteasome pathway influences mutant SOD1 solubility, we examined COS-7 cells transiently overexpressing either wild-type SOD1-FLAG or H46R SOD1-FLAG in the presence or absence of proteasome inhibitor MG132. In this experiment, FLAG-tagged SOD1 was used for discriminating exogenous SOD1 from endogenous SOD1 by migrating more slowly. Collected cell pellets were sequentially extracted with PBS, 1% TX, and 5% SDS. In the PBS-soluble and the TX-soluble fractions, the levels of mutant SOD1 as well as wild-type SOD1 slightly increased when MG132 was added in a dose-dependent manner (Fig. 4A). In the SDS-soluble fraction, a small amount of wild-type monomeric SOD1 was seen in the absence of MG132. The levels of wild-type SOD1 monomers increased without generating HMW species in the presence of 10 μM MG132. On the other hand, in the SDS-soluble fraction, mutant SOD1 monomers and dimers were obviously

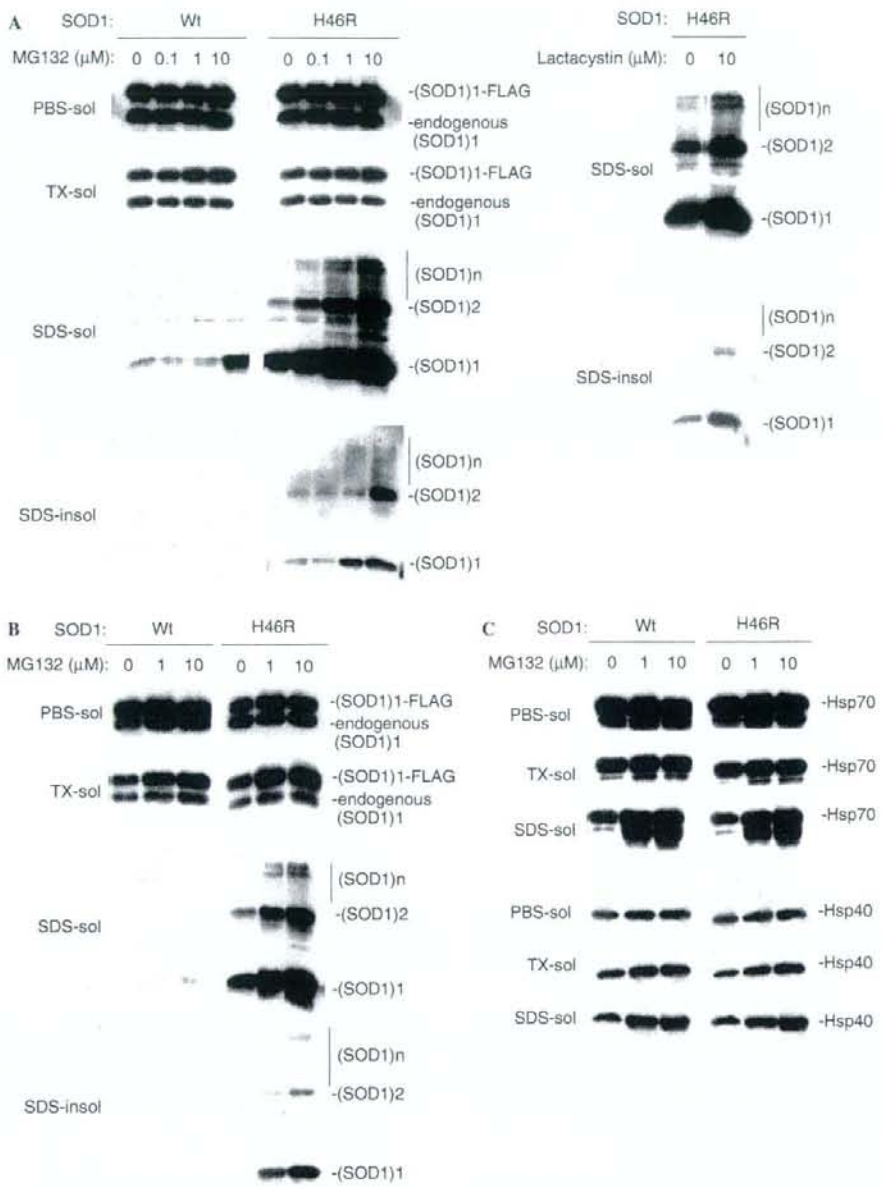

Fig. 4. Alteration of H46R SOD1 solubility in COS-7 and SH-SY5Y cells by treatment with proteasome inhibitors. COS-7 cells (A) and SH-SY5Y cells (B,C) were transiently transfected with either wild-type SOD1-FLAG pcDNA3.1 or H46R SOD1-FLAG pcDNA3.1. At 24 h after transfection, the culture medium was replaced with a fresh one containing the indicated concentrations of proteasome inhibitor, either MG132 (left panels of (A) and all panels of (B)) or lactacystin (right panels of (A)). Cells were incubated for an additional 24 h. Collected cell pellets were serially fractionated to the PBS-soluble fraction (PBS-sol), the TX-soluble fraction (TX-sol), the SDS-soluble fraction (SDS-sol), and the SDS-insoluble fraction (SDS-insol). Ten micrograms of protein from each of the PBS-soluble fraction, the TX-soluble fraction, and the SDS-soluble fraction, and equal aliquots of the SDS-insoluble fraction were subjected to the gel and immunoblotted with SOD1-100 (A,B). (C) The levels of both endogenous Hsp70 and Hsp40 were elevated in the SDS-soluble fraction from cells expressing wild-type SOD1 as well as mutant SOD1 in an MG-132 dose-dependent manner. The fractionated samples used in (B) were analyzed by Western blotting using anti-Hsp70 and anti-Hsp40 antibodies.

detected in the absence of MG132 and showed a significant increase in generating HMW species by treatment with MG132 in a dose-dependent manner (Fig. 4A). Similarly, in the SDS-insoluble fraction, the levels of mutant SOD1 monomers, dimers, and HMW species elevated by treatment with MG132 in a dose-dependent manner, while wild-type SOD1 was not detected (Fig. 4A). Dose-dependent treatment with MG132 further showed that the elevation of SDS-dissociable soluble mutant SOD1 monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers preceded that of SDS-stable soluble HMW species and SDS-insoluble species. Treatment with another specific proteasome inhibitor, lactacystin, also caused the accumulation of SDS-soluble and SDS-insoluble mutant SOD1 species in COS-7 cells, although to a lesser extent (Fig. 4A). We further confirmed the effect of MG132 on the alteration of SOD1 solubility in human neuroblastoma SH-SY5Y cells. By treatment with MG132, SDS-soluble and SDS-insoluble mutant SOD1 monomers, dimers, and HMW species accumulated in mutant-specific and dose-dependent manners in SH-SY5Y cells similar to COS-7 cells (Fig. 4B). The elevation of SDS-dissociable soluble mutant SOD1 monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers also preceded that of SDS-stable soluble HMW species and SDS-insoluble species. In SH-SY5Y cells expressing mutant SOD1, the levels of both endogenous Hsp70 and Hsp40 were elevated in the SDS-soluble fraction in an MG-132 dose-dependent manner (Fig. 4C). However, the increase of endogenous Hsp70 and Hsp40 levels in the SDS-soluble fraction was similarly observed in cells expressing wild-type SOD1 (Fig. 4C). These results showed that inhibition of the proteasome activity in mutant SOD1 expressed cells recapitulated the alteration of SOD1 solubility with aging in mutant transgenic mice. Inhibition of the proteasome activity initially led to the accumulation of SDS-dissociable soluble mutant SOD1 monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers prior to that of SDS-stable soluble HMW species and SDS-insoluble species irrespective of the increase of endogenous Hsp70 and Hsp40.

Effect of overexpression of Hsp70 on the accumulation of SDS-soluble and SDS-insoluble mutant SOD1 species

Overexpression of Hsp70 has been reported to reduce the SOD1-aggregate formation and prolong cellular viability in a cellular model of fALS [23]. As described in our previous report [20], overexpression of mutant SOD1 pEF-BOS in COS-7 cells causes higher expression levels of SOD1 than overexpression of mutant SOD1 pcDNA3.1, and a large amount of SDS-insoluble mutant SOD1 appears without adding proteasome inhibitor. By taking advantage of this high-expression system, we investigated cells co-transfected with mutant H46R SOD1 cDNA and a 4-fold molar excess of Hsp cDNA to see the effect of Hsp70 and Hsp40 on the levels of altered insoluble SOD1 species (Fig. 5A). Overexpression of Hsp70 obviously reduced the levels of SDS-dissociable soluble mutant SOD1 monomers, SDS-stable soluble dimers, and SDS-stable soluble HMW species, compared to co-expression of the empty vector (Fig. 5A). Overexpression of Hsp40 showed a weaker effect on the levels of SDS-soluble mutant SOD1 species (Fig. 5A). Co-overexpression with Hsp70 plus Hsp40 enhanced the effect of Hsp70 on a decrease of the levels of SDS-stable soluble mutant SOD1 dimers and HMW species (Fig. 5A). In the SDS-insoluble fraction, overexpression of Hsp70 also led to a reduction in the levels of SDS-dissociable insoluble mutant SOD1 monomers, SDS-stable insoluble dimers, and SDS-stable insoluble HMW species, and the effect was enhanced by co-overexpression of Hsp40 (Fig. 5A). This finding was also observed in cells expressing different fALS-linked mutant G93A SOD1 (data not shown). To further examine the molecular mechanism by which overexpression of Hsp70 reduced insoluble mutant SOD1 species, cells were co-transfected with H46R SOD1 and Hsp70 cDNAs in various molar ratios (Fig. 5B). The levels of mutant SOD1 monomers, dimers, and HMW species in the SDS-soluble fraction as well as in the SDS-insoluble fraction decreased in negative correlation to the amounts of transfected Hsp70 cDNA (Figs. 5B and C). On the other hand, the levels of mutant SOD1 monomers in the PBS-soluble and TX-soluble fractions did not increase, in sharp contrast to the significant reduction of the amount of SDS-soluble species by overexpression of Hsp70 (Figs. 5B and C). These findings demonstrated that overexpressed Hsp70 modulated the levels at SDS-dissociable soluble mutant SOD1 monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers as misfolded proteins and preferentially forwarded abnormally insoluble SOD1 species to degradation rather than to refolding.

Discussion

Although wild-type SOD1 is principally a soluble, cytosolic protein [4], fALS-linked mutant SOD1 has a tendency to assemble as insoluble aggregates, which are immunohistochemically observed as cytoplasmic inclusions in patients with fALS having SOD1 mutation [10]. There has been controversy about whether such inclusions are a cause or simply a result of the neuronal degeneration. Immunohistochemical experiments do not rule out the possibility that mutant SOD1 aggregates can damage motor neurons, even though microscopically visible inclusions are absent in the early period. In agreement with the previous finding [16,19], our immunohistochemical data demonstrated that SOD1-positive inclusions appeared after disease onset, and the accumulation of SOD1-positive inclusions was parallel to the elevation of most insoluble SOD1 species recovered in the FA-soluble fraction. On the other hand, we revealed that mutant H46R SOD1 began to significantly alter its solubility to SDS-dissociable soluble monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers earlier than the appearance of visible SOD1-positive inclusions. These findings suggest that complexes of SDS-dissociable soluble SOD1 monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers were much smaller in

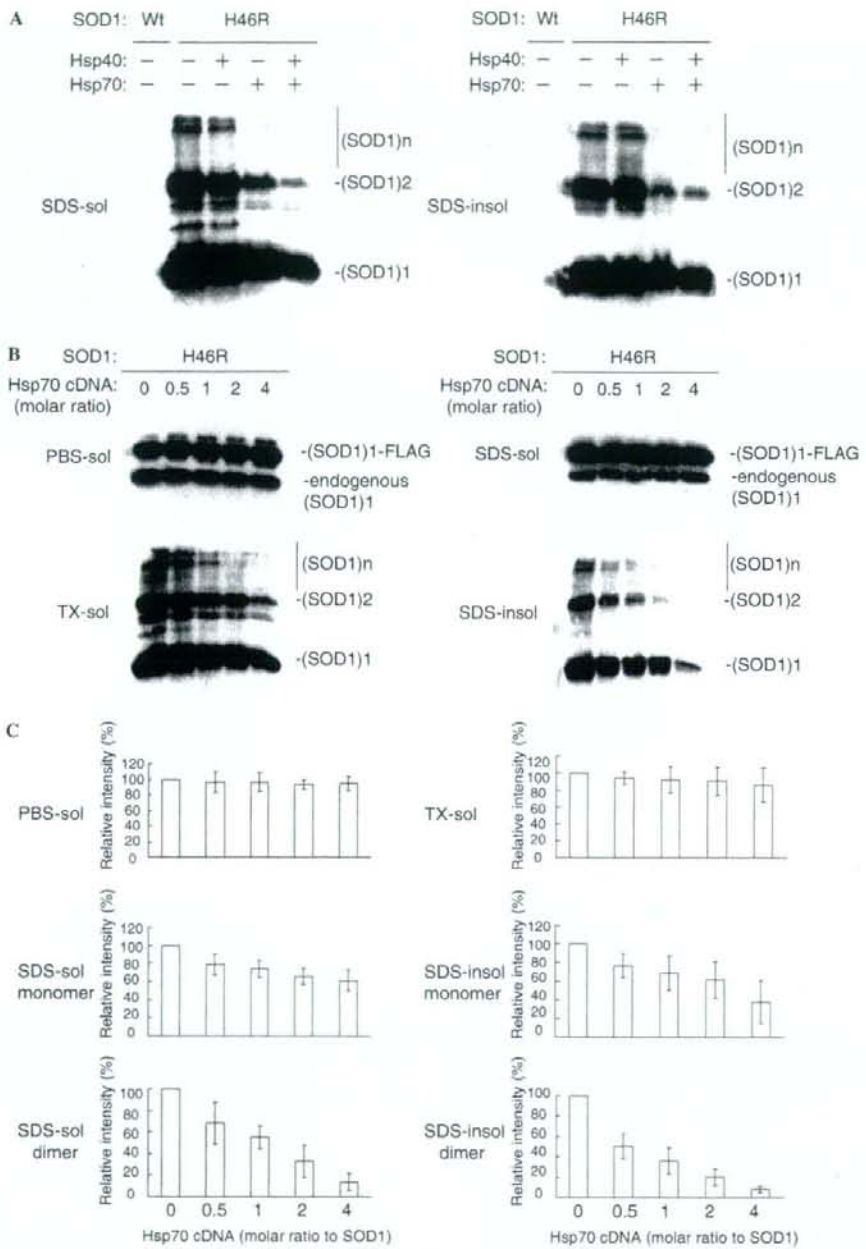

Fig. 5. The effect of overexpression of Hsp70 and Hsp40 on the level of altered insoluble mutant SOD1 in intact cells. (A) Western blots of COS-7 cells co-transfected with H46R SOD1-FLAG pEF-BOS and either pCMV-Hsp70 or pRC-Hsp40 (molar ratio of Hsp versus SOD1 cDNA was 4:1) using SOD1-100 antibody. Proteins from the SDS-soluble (SDS-sol) and SDS-insoluble (SDS-insol) fractions were loaded to the gel and immunoblotted with SOD1-100 antibody. (B) Western blot analysis of cells co-transfected with H46R SOD1-FLAG pEF-BOS and various amounts of Hsp70 cDNA. Molar ratios of pCMV-Hsp70 versus H46R SOD1-FLAG pEF-BOS are indicated in the figure. Forty-eight hours after transfection, cells were harvested and fractionated. Proteins from each fraction were analyzed by Western blotting using an SOD1-100 antibody. (C) The graphs show the relative intensities of H46R SOD1 monomers and dimers in each fraction shown in (B). The relative intensities were quantified by densitometry and normalized to bands from cells transfected with the empty vector ($n = 3$, bars represent mean ± SD).

size than visible inclusions, and the presence of visible inclusions composed of highly insoluble aggregates contributes less to the early pathological event.

Our findings are relevant to the previous reports that detergent-insoluble dimers and HMW species were found before onset of motor disability and the appearance of pathological SOD1-aggregates in mutant SOD1 transgenic mice [16,19]. However, in these preceding experiments, the alteration of mutant SOD1 solubility was assessed by fractionation using only one detergent. By the sequential extraction of mutant transgenic mouse spinal cords with PBS and TX containing buffer for removing cytosolic and mitochondrial SOD1 with normal solubility equivalent to wild-type SOD1, we separated H46R SOD1 into three different kinds of mutant-specific insoluble species, indicating that insoluble mutant SOD1 did not consist of a uniform species. To see whether SDS-dissociable soluble monomers, in addition to SDS-stable soluble dimers, represented early misfolded intermediates, we have investigated the alteration of SOD1 solubility using a cell culture model of fALS. Treatment with proteasome inhibitors caused the accumulation of SDS-dissociable soluble mutant H46R SOD1 monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers earlier than that of SDS-stable soluble HMW species and SDS-insoluble species. This finding resembled the age-dependent alteration of SOD1 solubility in mutant H46R SOD1 transgenic mice. In contrast, overexpression of Hsp70 reduced the levels of SDS-dissociable soluble mutant H46R SOD1 monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers. These findings indicate that SDS-dissociable soluble mutant SOD1 monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers are degraded by the proteasome pathway and are modulated by molecular chaperones as misfolded intermediates. The previous in vitro study showed that a normal homodimer of SOD1 dissociates to an aggregation-prone monomeric intermediate by oxidation [32]. Further experiments would be necessary to see how potentially aggregation-promoting modifications, such as oxidation and nitration, relate to the alteration of SOD1 solubility.

Several reports showed that Hsp70 and its co-chaperone Hsp40 were involved in the aggregation process or the degradation of SOD1 [11,33], and Hsp70 and Hsp40 suppress SOD1 aggregate formation and improve neurite outgrowth [34]. Although in the previous report up-regulation of Hsp70 was not observed in the spinal cords of mutant SOD1 transgenic mice in contrast to cultured cells overexpressing mutant SOD1 [23], we found that the levels of Hsp70 and Hsp40 in mutant SOD1 transgenic mice increased in the SDS-soluble fraction before disease onset. This observation is consistent with the report that Hsp70 interacts with detergent-insoluble SOD1 rather than detergent-soluble SOD1 in cells [33]. However, it should be noted that endogenous Hsp70 and Hsp40 in the SDS-soluble fraction do not suppress accumulation of insoluble mutant SOD1 in the present H46R SOD1 transgenic mice. Furthermore, Liu et al. [35] showed that elevation of Hsp70 does not affect ALS disease onset and survival in several types of mutant SOD1 transgenic mice co-overexpressing Hsp70 at ~10-fold higher levels than control mice, suggesting that there was no benefit from chronically elevated Hsp70. In cells, overexpression of Hsp70 reduced the levels of SDS-soluble and SDS-insoluble mutant H46R SOD1, whereas it did not lead to the elevation of PBS-soluble and TX-soluble SOD1 levels. This result implies that overexpression of Hsp70 had an effect on the levels of mutant-specific insoluble SOD1 species by forwarding them to the degradation pathway rather than refolding them to a normal soluble pool of SOD1. Adachi et al. [36] reported that overexpression of Hsp70 decreased soluble monomeric androgen receptor (AR) protein in addition to HMW mutant AR protein in double transgenic mice expressing mutant AR protein and Hsp70, suggesting that Hsp70 enhanced mutant AR degradation. Since inhibition of the proteasome activity in cells had a strong effect on the accumulation of insoluble mutant SOD1 with up-regulation of endogenous Hsp70 and Hsp40, the discrepancy in beneficial effects of Hsp70 between cellular and mouse models of fALS may be explained by several possibilities. First, the diminishing of the proteasome activity may generate abundant misfolded proteins whose concentration exceeds the capacity of up-regulated endogenous Hsp70/40. Second, the main function of Hsp70 is to facilitate the proteasome pathway-dependent clearance of misfolded SOD1. Third, the accumulation of insoluble SOD1 species directly impairs the chaperone function of Hsp70 [37]. An approach for examining the toxicity of SDS-dissociable soluble mutant SOD1 monomers and SDS-stable soluble dimers may provide a clue to prevent a further accumulation of potentially toxic misfolded protein complexes in fALS.

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