厚生労働科学研究費補助金こころの健康科学研究事業

スプライシングを利用した筋強直性ジストロフィーの治療

平成21年度 総括·分担研究報告書 研究代表者 石浦 章一 平成22(2010)年 4月

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厚生労働科学研究費補助金 (こころの健康科学研究事業) 総括研究報告書

スプライシングを利用した筋強直性ジストロフィーの治療

総括研究者 石浦章一 東京大学大学院 総合文化研究科 教授

研究要旨

筋強直性ジストロフィー (DM) は全身性の疾患で、CTG または CCTG というリピートが伸長することが原因で発症する。伸長したリピート RNA に、スプライシング因子 MBNL1 が結合し、正常のスプライシング機能を果たせないことが症状につながると考えられている。本年度、塩素チャネルのスプライシングを正常化することを目的に、アンチセンス配列を検討した。その結果、MBNL1 結合部位付近に作ったアンチセンスが、最も効率よく正常化スプライシングを誘導した。

分担研究者:西野一三

国立精神・神経センター神経研究所・部長

A. 研究目的

筋強直性ジストロフィー (DM) は常染色体優 性遺伝疾患で、遺伝的に DM1 と DM2 の 2 種類が報 告されている。前者は長く伸びた RNA の CUG3 塩 基リピート、後者は CCUG4 塩基リピートの伸長が 直接の病気の原因で、これらに MBNL1 や CUG-binding protein (CUG-BP)などの RNA 結合タ ンパク質がトラップされ、正常の機能が果たせな くなる「RNA 病」であることが明らかになってい る。リピートが伸長することによって、塩素チャ ネルのスプライシング異常が起こり、筋強直症状 があらわれる。これらは多くの動物実験で明らか になった。私たちは、塩素チャネルミニ遺伝子を 用いてスプライシング・アッセイ系を構築し、ス プライシング調節活性を持つ MBNL1 の標的配列 を明らかにすることを目的とした。次に、この配 列を標的としたエキソンスキッピングを行い、ス プライシング機能を正常化する新規 DM 治療法の 開発を目指した。

B. 研究方法(倫理面の配慮含tp)

塩素チャネルミニ遺伝子(エキソン 6、7a、7 でできている短い遺伝子)を用いて、エキソン 7a をスキップするか、しないか、というスプライシングアッセイが可能である。エキソン 7a がない成人(正常)型と、エキソン 7a を含む幼若

(異常)型の比率は、正常では圧倒的に前者が多く、DM 筋では後者が増えている。そこで、私たちが同定した MBNL1 結合部位近辺の配列 (1) で作成した 2-0-メチルアンチセンスオリゴ投与によって、どの程度スプライシングを正常化させることができるかを、まず COS-7 細胞にミニ遺伝子をトランスフェクトし、RNA 抽出後、スプライシングを RT-PCR で定量した。

(倫理面への配慮)

DM 患者生検筋は、患者からインフォームドコンセントを取得し、国立精神・神経センター倫理委員会で承認を受けたものを用いた。

C. 研究結果

エキソン7aの最初の塩基を1として、-15~10、0~25、26~50、51~75、76~+21をコードする各アンチセンスを、塩素チャネル・ミニ遺伝子をトランスフェクトした COS-7 細胞に添加して効果を見たところ、エキソン7aの0~25に対するアンチセンスを投与したときに、7a含有型の割合が約50%から10%に低下した。この抑制結果は、以前報告のあったアンチセンスより高く、筋強直の治療に使えるものと考えられた。

次に、2-0-メチルアンチセンスオリゴの代わり に生体内への保持能力の高いモルフォリノアン チセンスを使って同じ実験を行った結果、同じ配 列で効率のよいエキソン 7a のスキッピングが検 出された。

D. 考察

本実験は、Thorntonらが2007年に発表したアンチセンス法の改良版である。私たちは、まずミニ遺伝子上のMBNL1の結合部位を同定し、その付近に的を絞ってアンチセンスを設計した。その結果、KinoらがMBNL1結合配列と同定したエキソン7aの0-6と言う配列を含む0-25の部分が最も効率よくエキソンスキップを促すことが判明した。これはThorntonらの配列よりも効率がよいことが証明された。

E. 結論

現在、CTG リピートを 300 含むトランスジェニックマウスの成長を待っており、アンチセンスモルフォリノを用いて、実際に筋強直を防ぐ動物実験に入る準備は整った。

F. 健康危険情報

なし

G. 研究発表

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- H. 知的財産権の出願・登録状況 なし

2

厚生労働科学研究費補助金 (こころの健康科学研究事業) 分担研究報告書

先天性筋強直性筋ジストロフィーと先天性筋線維タイプ不均等症の ・ 病理学的鑑別に関する研究

研究分担者 西野 一三 国立精神・神経センター神経研究所部長

筋強直性ジストロフィーは、筋病理学的に多彩な所見を呈することが知られている。特に、先天性筋強直性ジストロフィー (CDM) では、先天性筋線維タイプ不均等症 (CFTD) との鑑別が困難なことがある。

1歳以下で筋生検を受け、CFTDと病理学的に診断された 28 例を対象に DMPK遺伝子の CTG 反復配列延長の有無を検討したところ、4 例 (14%) が CDM (CFTD_CDM) であった。CFTD_CDM の病理学的特徴を明らかにするために、臨床遺伝学的に診断された CDM 20 例 (CDM)、ACTAI 変異を伴う CFTD (CFTD_ACTAI) 4 例、TPM3 変異を伴う CFTD (CFTD_TPM3) 2 例を対象に研究を行った。筋線維タイプ不均等度 (%FSD) は、CFTD_CDM と比較し CFTD_ACTAI、CFTD_TPM3 において優位に高かった。

1 歳以下の CFTD 患者において、%FSD が 40% 以下の場合、CDM の可能性を検討す る必要がある。

A. 研究目的

先天性筋強直性ジストロフィーは、病理学的に乳児重症型のミオチュブラーミオパチーや先天性筋線維タイプ不均等症(CFTD)との鑑別が困難なことがある。そこで、CFTDと診断された1歳以下の例の中に CDM 例がないかを検討するとともに、遺伝学的に CDM と確認された例(CFTD_CDM)の病理学的特徴を明らかにすることを目的とした。

B. 研究方法

対象は、1978年~2007年までに国立精神・神経センター生検筋レポジトリーに登録された凍結筋検体の内、1歳以下の患者でCFTDと病理診断された28例(男12例、女16例、平均年齢9カ月)を対象とした。DNAを抽出し、triplet repeat PCR法により DMPK遺伝子内のCTG 反復配列延長の有

無を確認した。また、CTG 反復配列延長のなかった例を対象に ACTAI、TPM3遺伝子のシークエンス解析を行った。先天性筋強直性ジストロフィーと確認された 4 例(CTFD_CDM)を対象に、臨床遺伝学的に診断された CDM20 例、ACTAI 変異を伴うCFTD(CFTD_ACTAI) 4 例、TPM3 変異による CFTD(CTFD_TPM3)2 例の病理所見と比較検討した。

(倫理面配慮)

全ての検体について、国立精神・神経センター倫理委員会で承認を受けた「診断と検体の研究使用に関する承諾書」を用い、患者からのインフォームド・コンセントを取得している。

C. 研究結果

CTG 反復配列延長は 4 例(14%) に認められた。こ の4例における筋線維タイプ不均等度(%FSD)は、 平均 23.0±5.0%であった。一方、CDM では 7.2±6.8%、CFTD_ACTA1 では 47.5±4.0%、 CFTD TPM3 では 52.0±9.9%であり、CFTD CDM で は CFTD_ACTA1、TPM3 と比較し優位に低かった。 また、タイプ 1 線維の頻度は CFTD_CDM では 58.2±6.2%、CDM では 19.6±16.3%、CFTD_ACTA1 では 57.8±2.0%、CFTD_TPM3 では 65.5±12.0%で あり、CFTD CDM では CFTD ACTA1、TPM3 と同様に タイプ 1 線維優位を認めた。また、タイプ 2C 線 維は、CFTD_CDM では、CDM と比較し、著明な2C 線維の増加は認めなかった。また、臨床遺伝学的 に CDM と診断された 20 例のうち、タイプ 2 C 線維 が少なく、FSD が 15 から 21%と筋病理学的に CFTD に合致する所見を呈する例を3例認めた。

D. 考察

CFTD は%FSD が 12%以上であり、他に構造的異常が認められない筋疾患と定義されている。今回の結果から、1歳以下で病理学的に CFTD と診断された例のうち14%が CFTD_CDM であることが明らかとなった。 CFTD_CDM は、CFTD_ACTAI、CFTD_TPM3 と比較して明らかに%FSD が低く、CFTD の定義をより高い%FSD に設定することで、CFTD_CDM を除外することが技術的に可能であろうと考えられる。診断的には、%FSD が 40%以下の 1 歳以下の例では、CDM の可能性を検討する必要があることが示唆された。

E. 結論

%FSDが 40%以下の1歳以下の例ではCDMの可能性を検討する必要がある。

F. 健康危険情報 特になし

G. 研究発表

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研究成果の刊行に関する一覧表

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雑誌

発表者氏名	論文タイトル名	発表誌名	巻号	ページ	出版年
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Ⅷ. 筋・骨・運動器疾患−8

筋強直性ジストロフィー

Myotonic dystrophy

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1 基本病因、発症機序

筋強直性ジストロフィー (dystrophia myotonica: DM)は、常染色体優性の形式で発症する遺伝病である¹¹。多くの場合、DM は成人してから発症するが、それ以外に出産直後から DM の症状を示す場合 (先天性筋強直性ジストロフィー)や、子どものときに発症する場合などがある。出現頻度は8,000人に1人といわれている。これは成人発症型の筋ジストロフィーのなかではもっとも高い出現頻度であり、若年性の筋ジストロフィーのなかで

は Duchenne型についで2番目に多い。

1992年に責任遺伝子およびその遺伝子変異が同定された。この遺伝子は第19番染色体長腕13.3の部位に位置しており、新規の蛋白質リン酸化酵素 (DM protein kinase: DMPK)をコードしていた。しかし驚くべきことに、その変異は蛋白質の翻訳領域ではなく、3′側非翻訳領域にCTG三塩基リピートがあり、正常対照では繰り返し数が多くても37回、たいていは5回なのに対し、患者では最低でも50回以上、多いものでは数千回にまで達していることが判明したのである²)(図1a)。ま

a DM1型(第19番染色体)

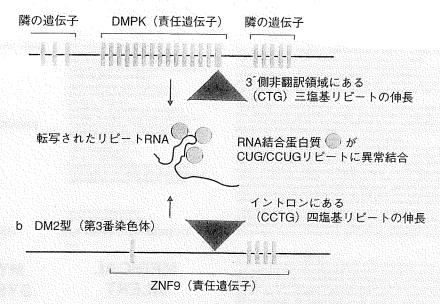


図1 筋強直性ジストロフィー(DM)の分子機構

筋強直性ジストロフィー(DM)は、常染色体優性の形式で発症する遺伝病である。現在までに、DM1型、DM2型の遺伝子座が同定されている。

- a: DM1型の責任遺伝子は第19番染色体に位置する。遺伝子変異は3° 側非翻訳領域にあるCTG三塩基リピートの伸長である。
- b: DM2 型の責任遺伝子は第3番染色体に位置する。遺伝子変異はイントロンにある CCTG 四塩基リピートの伸長である。DM1型、DM2型ともに、責任遺伝子の翻訳産物は変異を伴わないことに注意する必要がある。

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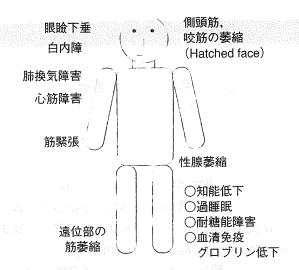


図2 DMでみられる全身的な症状 DM は筋ジストロフィーという名で想像される以上に、 きわめて多くの症状を併発する。DM でみられる全身 的な症状をここに示した。

た, CTG 三塩基リピートの数(長さ)と症状の重篤 度には正の相関があり、リピート数が長いほど症 状が重いことが示されている。さらに、DMでは 親よりも子, 子よりも孫の症状が重く, 発症時期 も早まる現象(表現促進現象)がみられることがあ るが、それは CTG 三塩基リピートが不安定であり、 世代間で配偶子を形成する際に伸長していくこと で説明されている。先に述べた先天性 DM なども, CTG 三塩基リピートが世代間で大幅に伸長した結 果であると説明される。

現在では、DM はスプライシング異常病と考え られている。後述するように、DM は筋肉のみな らず全身に多くの症状を併発するが、その分子的 な原因は責任遺伝子(DMPK)の翻訳産物の機能異常 ではなく,CTG 三塩基リピートが転写されてでき る CUG リピートが細胞内の RNA 結合蛋白質と異 常に結合し、RNA 結合蛋白質の本来の正常な機能 を阻害することにあることが示唆されている。そ の結果、本来 RNA 結合蛋白質を必要としている ほかのさまざまな遺伝子転写産物の成熟異常、つ まりスプライシング異常が起こり、本来必要とさ れていないスプライシングアイソフォームが発現

Note: it is very unlikely one person would develop all these problems.

Inheritance: Other family members are frequently affected. It can affect and be passed on by both sexes, but affected mothers are more at the set of having the accountsy affected boby than affected faithers. Genetic counselling is advised if genetic testing is bating considered. Accounte genetic tests are affected exhibitors and in early pregament where one permit as affected. Salivies and in early pregament where one permit is affected. After it is every minitedly one person would develop all these problems. Aoles if is every minitedly one person would develop all these problems.

Special difficulties in affected children: Muscle involvement can be more sevore, sepecially when myonoid dysurphy is pacean at Juff. Suppless may tive objuste may live objust a principle see mystored objuste may tive objuste may tive objuste may tive objuste may tive objustent see infine. However, if an affected baby surveys in history barents and doctors are offens surprised by the good progeres the child subsequently makes but speech, educational and behaviour problems are

Eye problems include catasters which cause blurring and dimming of vision. This may be the only problems include catasters which cause blurring and dimming of vision. This may be the capital Droopy spelids can cause a problem with reading and watching elevation. You should have regular checks at the optician and see a medical eye specialist if there is any concern. Anaesthetes are surpolly can cause problems with your recovery after an operation when centain anaesthetic drags are used. Abbec sure the surgion and ansesthetist know operation when centain anaesthetic drags are used. Abbec sure the surgion and ansesthetist know for a operation. They may wish to contact a specialist center for each of the contact as specialist center of the contact as a pacient of the contact as specialist center. On the contact as specialist center of the contact as a pacient of the contact as specialist center of the contact as pacients of the contact as specialist center of the contact as pacients of the contact as pacients of the contact as pacients are contact to the contact as pacients are contact of the contact as pacients are contact as a pacient of the contact as pacients are contact as a pacient of the contact as a pacient and an accordance of the contact as a pacient of the contact as a pacient and an accordance of the contact as a pacient of the contact as a pacient as a pacient of the contact as a pacient as a pacient of the contact as a pacient as a pacient of the contact as a pacient as a pacient and an accordance and a pacient and

information, regional and updated versions of the Card at: www.gla.ac.uk/muscleidm.htm Card enquines and suggestions to: d.e.wilcox@clinmed.gla.ac.uk Scottish Muscle Network: Email: info@muscular-dystrophy.org Web: www.muscular-dystrophy.org

Muscular Dystrophy Campaign: a chanky unding medical research and support, including Family Care Officers, for people with neuromuscular conditions. Tel: 0207 720 8056.

Email: mdsg@tesco.net Web: www.mdsguk.org Masqular musura

Myotonic Dystrophy Support Group: a self help group, willing to provide suppr families affected by Myotonic Dystrophy. Tel: 0115 987 0080

Regional Muscle Clinic: Address/contact details.

Further Information

Version 10.02 : 06/06/02

Phone

Address

Emergency Contact

Phone

Address

Bod

Personal Details

monning recessores and eayums steepiness.

Digestive problems are common ast the muscle throughout the digestive system may be affected.

This may lead to: swallowing problems (which can also be a cause of food entering the lungs): pains in the bowels with consulpains and distriber solling to ulenderwest particularly when stressed or excited and occasionally enlargement of the large bowel. Calistones, which can cause painful sparms excited and occasionally enlargement of the large bowel. Calistones, which cause painful sparms excited and occasionally enlargement of the large bowel. Calistones, which cause painful sparms excited that produce and occasionally enlarge and occasional enlargement of the manual enlargement of the enlargemen

Chest and breathing problems include chest infections. These may result from westeres of breathing musters, including the dispiragm, or from food entering lungs as a result of modeling indequate breathing during the right might lead to distuibed sleep, anoting, difficulty waking, momining freadachts and daylinne sleepiness. detect problems at an early stage.

Heart problems can cause abnormal rhythm of the heart might require treatment. This can affect adults, even those without symptoms. Regular ECGs (heart tracings) of affected adults are advised to

Myotonia, is a difficulty in relaxing a muscie after it has been contracted, e.g. after gripping something, it might be difficult to let go. Muscle weakness is very variable and can range from mild to severe. It particularly involves the face and eyelids, jaw, neck, forearms and hands, lower legs and feet. It can affect speech and give lack of feetal expression. Handwriting may start well but become a serawl after a few lines.

race and sleep at night is often poor-Tiredness is very common and sometimes can be extreme. Sleeping during the day increases with mailty changes are often the main problem reported by families and can include lack of stion, inertia, stubbomness and liking a set routine. This can lead to relationship problems with y, firends and at school or work.

Myotonic Dystrophy and how it could affect your health.

MEDICAL ALERT

The bearer of this card has MYOTONIC DYSTROPHY, a neuromuscular condition that may cause the following:

- A. muscle weakness and stiffness.
- B. extreme tiredness.
- speech difficulties.
- D. Adverse reaction to commonly used anaesthetic agents.
- E. Abnormal heart rhythm.

MYOTONIC DYSTROPHY



CARD

図3 欧米で筋強直性ジストロフィーの支援団体が発行している患者カード このカードは、折りたたむと携帯に便利なようにつくられている。文字の一部が反転してい るのはそのためであるが、本稿ではそのまま掲載した。

してしまうことが、この病気の症状につながって いるという見方が確立されている。

さらに、近位性筋強直性ミオパチー(proximal myotonic myopathy: PROMM)ともよばれていたDM2型の遺伝子座も同定されており、この場合は第3番染色体にあるZNF9とよばれる転写因子をコードする遺伝子の変異によって起こる。この場合も驚くべきことに、遺伝子変異は蛋白質の翻訳領域でなく、イントロン部分にあるCCTG四塩基リピートの伸長が発症の原因であることが報告されている³(図1b)。なお、CTG三塩基リピートの伸長が原因で発症する本来のDMをDM1型とよぶが、DM2型の出現頻度は1型に比べて圧倒的に少なく、わが国では1例が報告されたのみである。

② 基本病態

ここに、DM でみられる基本的な病態を示した (図 2)。DM の症状は筋肉だけに現れるだけでなく, 全身的な症状を併発することを特徴とする。また 図 3 は、欧米で患者が保持することを勧められているカードである。周囲の理解や、応急処置の際に役立つようにとの配慮がされている。基本的な症状についても記載されているので、参考にされたい。

③ 病態生理からみた臨床症候

一番の特徴に筋強直(ミオトニア)があり、握手のあとに手が開きにくい、などの症状がみられる。 筋力低下はとくに腕、顔、首で多くみられる。

顔面の筋力が低下した結果, 眼瞼下垂, 無表情, 下顎が下がるなどの特徴的な顔貌を呈する。

筋力低下は主に遠位性のものである。胸鎖乳突筋が衰えた結果,頭をもち上げるのが困難になる。 そのほか,腕や手の筋力が低下することにより, ものをもち上げたり,細かい仕事が難しくなる。

また,進行性の筋萎縮がみられる。年を経るご とに萎縮は進んでいくが,急激な変化をするわけ ではない。

そのほか,不整脈,呼吸障害,嚥下障害,胃腸障害,白内障,日中過眠,ホルモン障害,糖尿病などの全身的な症状を併発する。ただし,一人の患者がこれらすべての症状を呈することはまれで

あり、患者個人によって程度の差が非常に大きいことが知られている^{4,5)}。

4 病態生理からみた診断のための臨床検査

DM は常染色体優性の形式で起こる遺伝病であるため、遺伝子診断を行うのが確実である。国内にも検査業者は存在する。血液から DNA を回収し、サザン解析を行うのが現実的である。マーカーと交差する DNA 断片の長さを解析することにより、CTG リピートの長さを同定できる。PCR 反応は、より少量の DNA で検査できることが利点だが、CTGリピートは GC 含量に富むため、DM においては、通常の PCR 反応では DNA が増幅しにくく、増幅してもスメアとなって検出が難しい場合がある。

問題は、明らかな DM 症状が認められない場合の診断である。病院でほかの症状を訴える患者を検査したところ、実は DM だった、という例もある。具体的には、以下の症状が認められるとき、DM の可能性も疑われる (http://www.myotonic.com/go/mdf/disease-information/about-thedisease/diagnosis/complaints-and-specialists/を和訳、改変)。

- ・かかりつけの医師:疲労,熟睡できない,過度の日中の眠気,感情の低下
- ・小児科:いわゆる, ぐにゃぐにゃしている幼児や, 学習や行動に問題を抱えている場合
- ・眼科:白内障, 眼筋の筋力低下, 眼瞼下垂
- ・循環器科:不整脈、心筋障害
- ・呼吸器科:慢性の呼吸異常,睡眠時無呼吸, 慢性的な胸の風邪,嚥下障害による誤嚥性肺炎
- ・内分泌科:インスリン抵抗性, 甲状腺障害, 低テストステロン
- ・皮膚科:毛質性上皮腫
- ・胃腸科:慢性的な下痢,便秘,原因不明の胃 痛,胆石,嚥下障害
- ・産婦人科:子宮外妊娠, 不妊, 流産, 死産
- ・精神科:うつ,意欲低下,社会的な問題行動, 注意欠陥
- ・神経科:苦痛を伴う神経や筋肉の脱力や硬直, 慢性的な筋肉痛,認知発達の遅れ,決断力低下
- ・麻酔科:全身麻酔の前後で呼吸不全
- ・整形外科:足の形成不全,背骨の彎曲

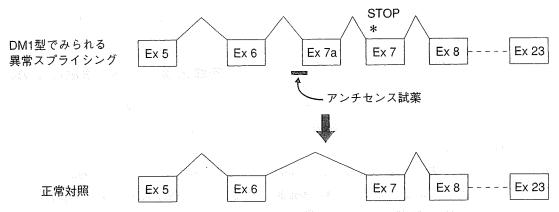


図4 モデルマウスを用いた、DMの根本治療に向けて行われている最新の研究 CTG/CCTG リピートの伸長により、DM 患者では、本来発現するべきではないスプライシング型の遺伝子が発現している。このことが、DM における多岐にわたる全身症状の原因となっている。この図で紹介する方法は、DM でみられる異常型のスプライシングパターンを示す遺伝子(ここでは、塩素チャネル遺伝子)を、相補的な配列をもつ短いアンチセンス試薬を投ずることによって正常型に戻そうとする試みである。まだマウスの段階だが、この方法での良好な効果が報告されている。 (Wheeler 6⁶)、2007より引用改変)

・口腔外科:正常な発音や咀嚼を妨げる骨形成 不全

・耳鼻科:聴力損失

・音声病理科:発音障害,嚥下障害・理学療法科:歩行困難と筋の脱力

⑤ 治療目標とその手順および症状検査所見 からみた効果判定指標

この病気は進行性の神経筋疾患であり、根本的な治療法は確立されていない。筋強直を和らげる場合には、イギリスではメキシレチンがよく使われる。またフェニトイン、キニーネ、プロカインアミドが使用されることもある。

筋萎縮を抑える薬は、今のところ開発されていない。筋力の低下を補う方法として、その部位をプラスチック装具で補助する、クラッチグラスを使用する、などの対応がとられている。運動の効果には個人差があり、指導者の計画のもとで行う必要がある。

根本的な治療としては、変異遺伝子を標的とし、その影響を抑えるような薬剤の開発が待たれるが、 先に述べたように DM の遺伝子変異は非常に特殊なものであり、間接的に影響を受ける遺伝子は多岐にわたるため、その治療法確立は容易ではない。

一方でモデルマウスを用いた最新の研究では, 病態に関連してスプライシング異常を受けている 遺伝子(ここでは、塩素チャネル)のスプライシン グパターンを正常型に戻すようなアンチセンス試 薬を打ち込むことで、スプライシング異常を受け た遺伝子を正常型の発現パターンに戻す試みが行 われ、一定の成果をあげたことが報告されている⁶⁾ (図 4)。

⑥ よくある合併症の病態生理とその診断・ 治療・予防

すでに記したように、DM では筋肉のみならず、 全身にわたる症状を併発する。これは、この遺伝 病の特殊な遺伝子変異によって説明がつく。表現 型は責任遺伝子の翻訳産物の機能いかんにかかわ らず、間接的にスプライシング異常を受けるほか の多くの遺伝子によるものと考えられているから である。

一般的にみて、麻酔は、DM 患者では重大な危険性がある。とくに、DM であるにもかかわらず、その診断がされていない場合、麻酔のリスクは高い (http://www.gla.ac.uk/centres/muscle/dam anaesthesia.htm)。

⑦症状経過、検査所見からみた予後判定

症状は漸次進行する。根本的な治療法は確立されておらず、今後の研究が待たれる。

<関連 Web site>

- Myotonic Dystrophy Foundation http://www.myotonic.com/go/mdf/
- International Myotonic Dystrophy Organization http://www.myotonicdystrophy.org/index.htm

文献

とくに、文献 4) が日本語で書かれていることもあり、入門 として最適である。本稿でも大いに参考にさせていただい た。分子機構に関する総説は多く出ているが、文献 7) がよ くまとまっている。総説のうち最新のものに 8) がある。

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MBNL and CELF proteins regulate alternative splicing of the skeletal muscle chloride channel CLCN1

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ABSTRACT

The expression and function of the skeletal muscle chloride channel CLCN1/C/C-1 is regulated by alternative splicing. Inclusion of the CLCN1 exon 7A is aberrantly elevated in myotonic dystrophy (DM), a genetic disorder caused by the expansion of a CTG or CCTG repeat. Increased exon 7A inclusion leads to a reduction in CLCN1 function, which can be causative of myotonia. Two RNA-binding protein families - muscleblind-like (MBNL) and CUG-BP and ETR-3-like factor (CELF) proteins-are thought to mediate the splicing misregulation in DM. Here, we have identified multiple factors that regulate the alternative splicing of a mouse Clcn1 minigene. The inclusion of exon 7A was repressed by MBNL proteins while promoted by an expanded CUG repeal or CELF4, but not by CUG-BP. Mutation analyses suggested that exon 7A and its flanking region mediate the effect of MBNL1, whereas another distinct region in intron 6 mediates that of CELF4. An exonic splicing enhancer essential for the inclusion of exon 7A was identified at the 5' end of this exon, which might be inhibited by MBNL1. Collectively, these results provide a mechanistic model for the regulation of Clent splicing, and reveal novel regulatory properties of MBNL and CELF proteins.

INTRODUCTION

Myotonic dystrophy (dystrophia myotonica, DM) type 1. or DM1, is a genetic disorder with multi-systemic symptoms, such as myotonia, progressive muscle loss, cataracts, cardiac conduction defects, insulin resistance and cognitive impairments (1). DM1 is caused by the

expansion of a CTG trinucleotide repeat in the 3'-untranslated region (UTR) of the DM protein kinase (DMPK) gene (2-4). Evidence suggests that the expanded CUG repeats transcribed from a mutated allele cause RNA gain-of-function effects that affect the function of other cellular factors. This concept is supported by transgenic mice (HSA^{LR}) expressing an expanded CUG repeat inserted in an unrelated gene (human skeletal actin, HSA) that manifest myotonia and abnormal muscle histology (5). Recently, a second locus of DM has been identified, and CCTG repeat expansion in intron 1 of the ZNF9 gene was found to be causative of DM type 2 (DM2; 6). Remarkably, in the nuclei of cells of patients with both DM1 and DM2, RNA inclusions containing CUG and CCUG repeats, respectively, have been observed (6-8). In addition, abnormalities in RNA metabolism have been found in the cells of DM patients. Splicing of certain genes is misregulated in DM1 These genes include cardiac troponin T (cTNT'TNNT2), insulin receptor (IR), chloride channel 1 (CLCNI), fast skeletal troponin T (TNNT3), sarcoplasmic/endoplasmic reticulum Ca² -ATPase (SERCA) 1 and others (9-14). The splicing patterns of some of these genes are also misregulated in DM2 patients and the HSA^{LR} mouse (12.15,16). These results suggest that certain RNAbinding proteins that regulate pre-mRNA splicing of these genes are abnormally influenced by the mutant transcripts containing expanded CUG/CCUG repeats (17).

Two protein families—muscleblind-like (MBNL) and CUG-BP and ETR-3-like factor (CELF) proteins—may play major roles in the pathogenesis of DM MBNL proteins MBNL1 EXP. MBNL2/MBLL/MLP1 and MBNL3/MBXL/CHCR are orthologs of the *Drosophila* muscleblind protein, which is involved in the terminal differentiation of photoreceptor and muscle cells in the fly (18,19). All three MBNL proteins can colocalize with RNA inclusions of expanded CUG/CCUG repeats in

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both DM1 and DM2 cells (20). MBNL1 binds directly to both CUG and CCUG repeat RNA in a length-dependent manner in vitro (21,22). Therefore, these proteins are considered to be sequestered by the expanded RNA through direct interactions, and their cellular functions can be disrupted in both types of DM. Remarkably, knockout mice of Mbnl1 manifest some DM-like symptoms, including myotonia, abnormal muscle histology and cataracts (13). More recently, Mbnl2 knockout mice were reported to manifest myotonia (23). Importantly, cellular studies have demonstrated that MBNL proteins can directly

genes, which are misregulated in DM1 patients (24,25). These results strongly support the hypothesis that loss of function of MBNL proteins leads to the misregulation of

regulate the alternative splicing of the cTNT and IR

splicing in DM

CELF proteins are another protein family involved in the pathogenesis of DM1 CELF proteins CUG-BP CUGBPI BRUNOL2. ETR-3/CUGBP2/NAPOR/ BRUNOL3. CELF3/TNRC4/BRUNOL1, CELF4 CELF5/BRUNOL5 CELF6/ BRUNOL4. and BRUNOL6 are multi-functional proteins that play regulatory roles in translation, RNA editing, mRNA stability. as well as splicing (26-29). CUG-BP regulates the alternative splicing of cTNT exon 5, IR exon 11 and CLCNI intron 2 (9-11). In DM1 patients, the expression of CUG-BP protein is elevated because of protein stabilization induced by PKC-mediated phosphorylation (10,30,31). Moreover CUG-BP transgenic mice can reproduce some of the muscular abnormalities observed in DM1 or its congenital form, including aberrant splicing and muscle histology (32,33). CUG-BP acts antagonistically against MBNL proteins in the splicing regulation of cTNT and IR (24,25), suggesting that altered CELF activities, in addition to the loss of MBNL function, can induce aberrant splicing in DM1 However, the extent to which these proteins can account for splicing abnormalities and the pathogenesis of DM remains

Myotonia is a characteristic symptom of both DM1 and DM2 and has been linked with a loss of function of CLCN1 chloride channel caused by aberrant splicing of its pre-mRNA in DM patients (11,12). The CLCN1 protein is a muscle-enriched voltage-gated chloride channel and is important for stabilizing the resting potential of muscle membrane (34). More than 50 mutations of CLCN1 have been found in myotonia congenita. another genetic disorder with myotonia, directly linking defects of CLCN1 with the pathogenesis of myotonia (35). In DM1 patients, the abnormal inclusion of alternative exons 6B and/or 7A and retention of intron 2 of CLCN1 have been observed (11 12). These aberrant-splicing patterns can lead to CLCN1 transcripts containing premature termination codons, resulting in an enhanced degradation of transcripts through the mechanism of nonsense-mediated mRNA decay (NMD), or the production of truncated proteins having a dominant-negative effect (12.36). Consistently, the levels of CLCN1 mRNA and protein are considerably lower in the muscle of DM patients (11.12). Thus, the misregulated splicing of CLCN1 in

DM1 leads to a reduction in CLCN1 activity, which can be causative of myotonia.

In mouse models expressing an expanded CUG repeat (HSA^{LR}) or lacking Mbn11, the inclusion of exon 7A in mouse Clcn1 increased, as in human CLCN1 of DM patients (12,13). It is important to note that the introduction of exogenous MBNL1 into HSA^{LR} mice by viral administration reversed the misregulation of Clen1 splicing as well as the myotonic phenotype (37). Furthermore, antisense oligonucleotide (AON)-induced exon 7A skipping resulted in the upregulation of Clcn1 mRNA and protein levels and eliminated myotonia in both HSA^{LR} and Mbnll knockout mice (38). This suggests that the misregulation of Clcn1 splicing alone can explain the pathogenesis of myotonia in these mouse models. Therefore, MBNL proteins play an essential role in the splicing regulation of Clen1 and are probably involved in the pathogenesis of myotonia in DM Although the loss of function of MBNL was reproduced in these two mouse models, another pathogenic pathway involving CELF proteins might have been underrepresented in these models, which did not show elevated CUG-BP protein levels (13,16,39). Therefore, it is important to ask whether CELF proteins are involved in the regulation of CLCNI/ClcnI splicing. Indeed, CUG-BP binds directly to an element in intron 2 and promotes the retention of this intron (11). Furthermore, CUG-BP transgenic mice exhibit increased inclusion of Clen1 exon 7A, even though the manifestation of myotonia is not clear (33). Thus, it is important to characterize the roles of MBNL and CELF proteins in the regulation of Clen1 splicing to understand the mechanism of myotonia in DM Although increased exon 7A inclusion is the most frequent abnormality of CLCN1/Clcn1 splicing in DM (12), the mechanism of its regulation is still unclear

We established a *Clcn1* minigene assay system and identified multiple *cis*- and *trans*-acting factors that regulate the alternative splicing of *Clcn1* exon 7A. The essential role of MBNL proteins in the normal splicing pattern of *Clcn1* was verified. Our results also highlight some CELF proteins as antagonistic regulators against MBNL proteins.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

cDNA clones and constructs

MBNL1 and MBNL2 were amplified by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) from a human skeletal muscle cDNA library (BD Marathon-Ready human cDNA, Clontech). MBNL3 was amplified from a human liver cDNA library Because the amplified MBNL3 cDNA clones contained an extra exon compared to a previous MBNL3 sequence, this exon was deleted by PCR-mediated mutagenesis. CELF proteins ETR-3, CELF3, CELF4, CELF5 and CELF6 were amplified from cDNA libraries of either brain or skeletal muscle of human origin. CUG-BP was amplified from pSRD/CUG-BP (40). Forward primers for the amplification of these cDNAs contained BamHI. BgIII, or EcoRI sites, whereas the reverse primers contained either SalI or XhoI sites to add these restriction sites to

the PCR products. Fragments of these cDNAs were inserted into the BamHI-XhoI or EcoRI-XhoI site of pSecDK, a mammalian expression vector with a myc-tag that was modified from pSecTagA (Invitrogen) to delete the Igk chain leader sequence. Constructs encoding GST-MBNL1₄₀ has been described previously (22). The Clcn1 minigene fragment covering exons 6 to 7 was amplified from mouse genomic DNA by PCR using the primer pair Clen1-Fw and Clen1-Rv, into which a restriction site for BamHI or SalI was added. Similarly, the corresponding fragment of human CLCN1 was amplified using primers CLCN1-Fw and CLCN1-Rv. The minigene fragments were ligated into pGEM-T Easy vector (Promega). The minigene fragments in pGEM-T Easy were cleaved by BamHI and SalI and then subcloned into the BglII-SalI site of pEGFP-C1 (Clontech). A series of deletion mutants of Clen1 was generated by PCR-mediated mutagenesis. To construct heterologous minigenes, we inserted alternative exons with flanking regions such as Clen1 451-720 into the BglII-Sall sites of pEGFP-Tpm2-ex1-2 vector (see Supplementary 'Materials and Methods' section). Primer sequences are listed in Supplementary Table S1 Detailed information on the sequences and construction of mutant minigenes is available upon request DM18 and DM480 contain a fragment of the 3' region of DMPK with a CTG18 and interrupted CTG480 repeats, respectively (Supplementary

R-miR. a vector modified from pcDNATM6.2-GW EmGFP-miR (Invitrogen), was utilized for RNA interference (RNA1) experiments. R-miR contains a cDNA fragment of monomeric RFP (mRFP) in place of EmGFP and an Esp3I recognition site introduced downstream of mRFP DNA fragments corresponding to a portion of an artificial microRNA (Supplementary Table S2) were designed using BLOCK-iT RNA Designer (Invitrogen website) and inserted into the Esp31 site of R-miR.

The FANTOM3 clone plasmids encoding murine Mbnl3 (E430034C16), Cugbp1 (4432412L08), Cugbp2, Etr-3 (9530098D08) and Celf4 (C130060B05) used for testing RNAi efficiency in Neuro2a cells were provided by Dr Hayashizaki (41). Murine Mbnll and Mbnl2 were amplified from a mouse brain cDNA library. The N-terminal regions of Mbnl1, Mbnl2 and Mbnl3 and the full-length open reading frames of Cugbp1, Cugbp2 and Celf4 were amplified with primers containing restriction sites, digested by the restriction enzymes, and inserted into the BglII-SalI site of the pEGFP-C1 vector All constructs were confirmed by sequencing.

Cellular splicing assay

Cells transfected with plasmids for the expression of a protein and a minigene were harvested 48 h posttransfection. Typically, cells were cultured in 12-well plates and transfected with 0.5 µg plasmids for protein expression (or cognate empty vector) and $0.01 \,\mu g$ plasmids for the expression of a minigene. Total RNA was extracted and purified using either the acidic guanidine phenol chloroform method or RNeasy Mini

kit (Qiagen) including DNase treatment. Typically, 1.0 µg total RNA was reverse-transcribed using the ThermoScript RT-PCR System (Invitrogen) or Revertra Ace -α- (TOYOBO) with a 1 1 mixture of oligo dT and random hexamer as primers. Minigene fragments were amplified by PCR using a fluorescein isothiocyanate (FITC)-labeled forward primer for the 3' region of the EGFP sequence (FITC-GFP-Fw) and a gene-specific reverse primer (Clcn1-Rv for Clcn1 or CLCN1-Rv for CLCN1 Supplementary Table S1). For Tpm2-based minigenes, primers FITC-GFP-Fw and Tpm2-ex2splicing-Rv2 were used for amplification. PCR products were resolved by 2.0-2.5% agarose gel electrophoresis. By sampling at multiple cycles, the cycle numbers of PCR were adjusted such that the amplification was within the logarithmic phase. The fluorescence of PCR products was captured and visualized by LAS1000 or LAS3000 (FUJIFILM). The intensity of band signals was quantified using Multigauge software (FUJIFILM). The ratio of exon 7A inclusion in Clen1 and CLCN1 was calculated as $(7A \text{ inclusion})/(7A \text{ inclusion} + 7A \text{ skipping}) \times 100$.

Quantitative PCR.

Gene-specific primers were designed using Primer Express software (Applied BioSystems) and are listed in Supplementary Table S3. These primer sets were mixed with cDNA samples and Power SYBR Green PCR Master Mix (Applied BioSystems). Real-time amplification and quantification were performed using an ABI7700 (Applied BioSystems) following the manufacturer's protocol.

Gel shift analysis

GST and GST-MBNL1 were purified as described previously (22). Oligo DNA templates corresponding to Clen1(473-518) (CTGCCCAGGCACGGTCTGCAACA GAGAAGCACGACGGCGAGGCAGCCCTATAGT GAGTCGTATTACCCC). Clcn1(GAA) (CTGTTCTTC TTCTTCCTGCAACAGAGAAGCACGACGGGCGA GGCAGCCCTATAGTGAGTCGTATTACCCC), and Clen1(a504c) (CTGCCCAGGCACGGGCTGCAACAG AGAAGCACGACGGCGAGGCAGCCCTATAGTG AGTCGTATTACCCC) were purchased from Invitrogen and annealed with another DNA fragment for the T7 (GGGGTAATACGACTCACTATAGGG). Using this partial duplex as a template, we transcribed RNA using T7 RNA polymerase (MEGAscript T7 kit; Ambion). The RNA was purified by phenol-chloroform extraction followed by ethanol precipitation. The purified RNA was treated with alkaline phosphatase, then labeled by T4 polynucleotide kinase in the presence of γ -32P-ATP The labeled RNA was purified using a Nucaway spin column (Ambion). The procedures and reaction mixture used in the gel shift analysis are described in our previous report (22).

Ribonucleoprotein immunoprecipitation

Ribonucleoprotein immunoprecipitation (RIP) was performed as described previously (42), with minor modifications. The amount of co-precipitated minigene RNA was quantified by SYBR green-based Quantitative PCR (qPCR) using the primers listed in Supplementary Table S3. The procedure is described in the Supplementary 'Materials and Methods' section.

RESULTS

MBNL and CELF proteins regulate the inclusion of Clcn1 exon 7A

To examine whether the MBNL and CELF family proteins can regulate the splicing of *Clcn1*, we created a minigene covering exons 6 to 7 of the mouse *Clcn1* gene (Figure 1A). It is important to note that because the inclusion of exon 7A does not produce a premature termination codon in the context of our *Clcn1* minigene, the spliced products containing exon 7A are not substrates of NMD. Thus, the minigene would provide more faithful splicing patterns compared to the endogenous

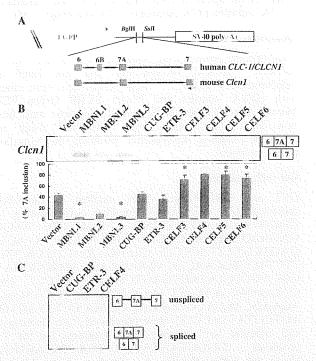


Figure 1. Splicing regulation of MBNL and CELF proteins. (A) Structure of chloride channel minigenes. Both human CLCN1:ClC-1 and mouse Clcn1 minigenes were subcloned between the BgIII and Sall sites of pEGFP-C1. Black boxes represent exons of the minigenes. Arrows indicate the position of primers used in the splicing assays. Exon 6B is a human-specific exon and is absent in Clcn1. (B) Splicing regulation of Clcn1 by MBNL and CELF proteins. Representative results of cellular splicing assays using the Clcn1 minigene in COS^{-1} cells. The upper bands correspond to a splice product containing exon 7A. whereas lower bands correspond to a splice product lacking exon 7A. Bar chart shows quantified results of exon 7A inclusion (mean \pm SD. n = 3). Statistical significance was analyzed by analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Dunnett's multiple comparisons. All MBNL proteins and CELF proteins except for CUG-BP and ETR-3 showed significant differences (*P < 0.0001) compared to the empty vector. (C) CUG-BP and ETR-3 increased an unspliced product of the Clcn1 minigene. Structures of PCR products are indicated.

Clen1 We utilized non-muscle cell lines to minimize the effect of muscle-dependent backgrounds and focus on the direct effects of transgenes. When the Clcn1 minigene was transfected into COS-7 cells, 45% of the spliced products contained exon 7A (Figure 1B). Next we expressed myctagged MBNL or CELF proteins with the Clcn1 minigene and examined the patterns of Clen1 splicing. The expressions of MBNL and CELF proteins were confirmed by Western blot analysis using an anti-myc antibody (Supplementary Figure S6A). All three MBNL proteins strongly repressed exon 7A inclusion (Figure 1B). In contrast, CELF3, CELF4, CELF5 and CELF6 proteins significantly promoted the inclusion of 7A (Figure 1B). Remarkably, CUG-BP and ETR-3 did not alter the ratio of exon 7A inclusion (Figure 1B). These two proteins increased the unspliced product and reduced the spliced products with or without exon 7A (Figure 1C).

CELF4 and expanded CUG repeats act antagonistically against MBNL1 in the splicing regulation of Clcn1

We investigated whether CELF proteins can antagonize the effect of MBNL1 Among CELF proteins that promoted exon 7A inclusion in Clcn1, CELF4 was used for the following analyses because this protein is expressed in muscle (26.43). CELF4 and two other muscle-expressed CELF proteins, CUG-BP and ETR-3, were co-transfected with MBNL1, as well as the Clcn1 minigene. As shown in Figure 2A, CELF4 increased the ratio of exon 7A in a dose-dependent manner (lanes 7 and 8), whereas CUG-BP or ETR-3 did not (lanes 3-6). When MBNL1 was titrated in the presence of CELF4, a decrease in exon 7A inclusion was observed, depending on the dosage of MBNL1 (Figure 2A, lanes 9 11). These results demonstrate that MBNL1 and CELF4, but not CUG-BP or ETR-3, can regulate Clen1 exon 7A splicing in an antagonistic manner

We also examined DMPK constructs harboring either CTG18 (DM18) or interrupted CTG480 (DM480) in the 3'-UTR. When these constructs were expressed with the Clen1 minigene, DM480 increased exon 7A inclusion, whereas DM18 showed little effect (Figure 2B, left). These constructs were next expressed in the presence of MBNL1 As shown previously, MBNL1 alone strongly repressed the inclusion of exon 7A. DM480 reversed the repression of exon 7A inclusion by MBNL1, whereas DM18 did not (Figure 2B, right). Thus, expanded CUG repeats can antagonize the effect of MBNL1 on Clen1 splicing.

Finally, we performed knockdown experiments using vector-based RNAi to examine whether the regulation of *Clcn1* splicing is dependent on the dose of endogenous MBNL1 or CUG-BP The RNAi vector used here expresses an artificial microRNA that is exactly complementary to a region of its target gene, leading to degradation of the target mRNA. For RNAi experiments, we utilized Neuro2a and HeLa cells rather than COS-7 because of the availability of cDNA sequence information essential for the design of microRNA. First, the overexpression of MBNL1 in Neuro2a cells strongly repressed the inclusion of exon 7A as in COS-7 cells (M, Figure 2C).

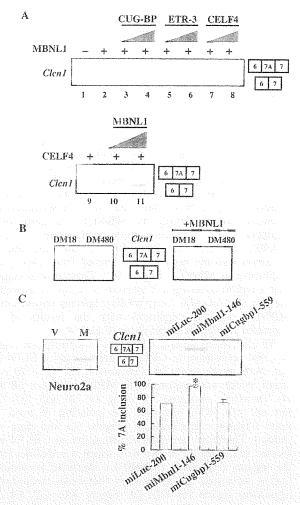


Figure 2. MBNL1 is antagonized by CELF4 and expanded CUG repeats. (A) Antagonistic effects of CELF4 against MBNL1 in the splicing regulation of Clen1 Clen1 minigene was co-transfected with MBNL1 or MBNL1 plus CELF protein into COS-7 cells. Upper panel: lane 1 the pattern of empty vector-transfected cells; lanes 2 8. a constant amount of MBNL1-encoding vector and increasing amounts of one of the CELF-encoding vectors were co-transfected at ratios of 1 0 (lane 2), 1 1 (lanes 3, 5 and 7) and 1 3 (lanes 4, 6 and 8). Lower panel: similarly a CELF4-encoding vector and MBNL1-encoding vector were transfected at ratios of 1 0 (lane 9), 1 1 (lane 10) and 1 3 (lane 11) The total amount of transfected plasmids was held constant by adjusting the amounts of empty vector. (B) Effects of an expanded CUG repeat on the chloride channel splicing. Clen1 minigene was transfected with an expression vector of DMPK harboring a normal (DM18) or expanded (DM480) CTG repeat (left panel). Either normal or expanded DMPK vector was co-transfected with MBNL1 and the Clen1 minigene, and the splicing patterns were analyzed (right panel). (C) Results of Clen1-splicing assays in Neuro2a cells. MBNL1-mediated repression of exon 7A inclusion in Neuro2a cells (left). 'V' and 'M' indicate empty vector and MBNL1, respectively. Note that the basal inclusion of exon 7A in Neuro2a cells was higher than that in COS-7 cells. Clcn1-splicing regulation was affected by RNAi of Mbn11 but not Cugbp1 in Neuro2a cells (right). Bar chart shows the quantified results of exon 7A inclusion (mean \pm SD, n 4). According to ANOVA and Dunnett's test. miMbnll-146 induced a statistically significant increase of exon 7A compared to miLuc-200 (*P < 0.0001), whereas miCugbpl-559 did not 0.36).

An RNAi vector miMbnII-146 was effective in reducing both Mbnll and Mbnl2 and increased the inclusion of Clen1 exon 7A compared to a control vector miLuc-200 (Figure 2C and Supplementary Figure S1). Another RNAi vector, miMbn11-236, also increased exon 7A inclusion (data not shown). We also used HeLa cells for RNAi experiments and found that the knockdown of MBNL1 resulted in an increase in exon 7A inclusion (Supplementary Figure S2). Therefore, the splicing of Clen1 exon 7A is regulated by MBNL in a dose-dependent manner In contrast, an effective RNAi vector targeting endogenous Cugbpl, miCugbpl-559, did not alter exon 7A splicing (Figure 2C and Supplementary Figure S1). We were not able to confirm the knockdown of endogenous Etr-3/Cugbp2 and Celf4 because of very low or undetectable endogenous expression in the cell lines used in this study (data not shown); thus, the RNAi of Etr-3 and Celf4 was not tested in the splicing analysis.

Involvement of the exon 7A sequence in the splicing regulation by $\ensuremath{\mathsf{MBNL1}}$

To understand the mechanism by which MBNL1 represses the inclusion of Clen1 exon 7A, we tried to define the regions of the Clen1 minigene that are responsive to MBNLI For this purpose, we examined a series of Clen1deletion mutants lacking a region in either introns 6 or 7A (Δ 1 Δ 9. Figure 3A). As shown in Figure 3B, deletions in intron 6 altered the basal splicing pattern. For example, the $\Delta 1$ mutant exhibited increased inclusion of exon 7A, suggesting the presence of an element in the deleted region that represses exon 7A inclusion. However, this mutant and the other intron 6 mutants ($\Delta 2$ – $\Delta 5$) were strongly repressed by MBNL1 (Figure 3B, upper panel). Similarly, the series of intron 7A mutants did not lose responsiveness to MBNL1 ($\Delta 6$ – $\Delta 9$, Figure 3B). Thus, large portions of these intronic regions could be excluded from the region critical for responsiveness to **MBNLI**

Next we examined another series of deletion mutants (Figure 4A, left). When minigene 6-7A was expressed with the empty vector, both spliced and unspliced products were observed (Figure 4A). Co-expression with MBNL1 resulted in the repression of splicing (Figure 4A). In the case of 7A-7, the expression of MBNL1 did not cause a significant change compared to that of the empty vector (Figure 4A). To examine whether the responsiveness of 6-7A was dependent on the sequence of exon 7A, we analyzed the 6/7 mutant, in which the sequence of exon 7A was virtually replaced with that of exon 7 Interestingly, this replacement completely abolished the responsiveness to MBNL1 (Figure 4A, right panels). The observed loss of response in the 6.7 mutant was not due to inefficient basal splicing of exon 7, because replacement of the first 12 nt of exon 7 in the 6/7 mutant with an exonic-splicing enhancer (ESE) markedly increased the spliced products but did not improve the responsiveness to MBNL1 (Supplementary Figure S3). Thus, exon 7A should contain at least part of the MBNL1-responsive region. In addition, intron 6 alone was insufficient for response to MBNL1 To further