

Luminal membrane expression of mesothelin is a prominent poor prognostic factor for gastric cancer

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BACKGROUND: Mesothelin is expressed in various types of malignant tumour, and we recently reported that expression of mesothelin was related to an unfavourable patient outcome in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma. In this study, we examined the clinicopathological significance of the mesothelin expression in gastric cancer, especially in terms of its association with the staining pattern.

METHODS: Tissue specimens from 110 gastric cancer patients were immunohistochemically examined. The staining proportion and intensity of mesothelin expression in tumour cells were analysed, and the localisation of mesothelin was classified into luminal membrane and/or cytoplasmic expression.

RESULTS: Mesothelin was positive in 49 cases, and the incidence of mesothelin expression was correlated with lymph-node metastasis. Furthermore, luminal membrane staining of mesothelin was identified in 16 cases, and the incidence of luminal membrane expression was also correlated with pT factor, pStage, lymphatic permeation, blood vessel permeation, recurrence, and poor patient outcome. Multivariate analysis showed that luminal membrane expression of mesothelin was an independent predictor of overall patient survival.

CONCLUSION: We described that the luminal membrane expression of mesothelin was a reliable prognostic factor in gastric cancer, suggesting the functional significance of membrane-localised mesothelin in the aggressive behaviour of gastric cancer cells.

British Journal of Cancer (2012) **107**, 137–142. doi:10.1038/bjc.2012.235 www.bjcancer.com

Published online 29 May 2012

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Keywords: mesothelin; luminal membrane expression; gastric cancer

Mesothelin is a 40-kDa cell surface glycoprotein and is expressed on normal mesothelial cells lining the pleura, pericardium, and peritoneum (Chang *et al*, 1992; Chang and Pastan, 1996). Moreover, mesothelin is overexpressed in various types of malignant tumour, including malignant mesothelioma, ovarian cancer, and pancreatic cancer (Argani *et al*, 2001; Ordonez, 2003a, b; Hassan *et al*, 2005a; Einama *et al*, 2011). The full length of human *mesothelin* gene codes the primary product being a 71-kDa precursor protein. It can be physiologically cleaved by some furin-like proteases into a 40-kDa C-terminal fragment that remains membrane bound, and a 31-kDa N-terminal fragment, which is secreted into the blood (Chang and Pastan, 1996). The C-terminal 40-kDa fragment is named mesothelin and is attached to the cell membrane through a glycosyl-phosphatidylinositol (GPI) anchor (Chang and Pastan, 1996; Hassan *et al*, 2004).

The biological functions of mesothelin are not clearly understood, although recent studies have suggested that overexpression of mesothelin increases cell proliferation and migration (Li *et al*, 2008). In ovarian cancers, diffuse mesothelin staining correlated significantly with prolonged survival in patients who had advanced-stage disease (Yen *et al*, 2006), and another report

indicated that a higher mesothelin expression is associated with chemoresistance and shorter patient survival (Cheng *et al*, 2009). In pancreatic cancer, mesothelin expression was immunohistochemically observed in all cases, while its absence was noted in non-cancerous pancreatic ductal epithelium, with or without pancreatitis (Argani *et al*, 2001; Swierczynski *et al*, 2004; Hassan *et al*, 2005b; Einama *et al*, 2011). Furthermore, we recently explored that the expression of mesothelin was related to an unfavourable patient outcome in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma. However, in gastric cancer, which is one of the representative gastrointestinal cancers, mesothelin expression seems to correlate with prolonged patient survival (Baba *et al*, 2011); this is a paradoxical result for the other types of carcinomas. In this study, we investigated the immunohistochemical analysis of mesothelin in 110 primary gastric cancers, especially focussing in the localisation of mesothelin, that is, luminal membrane and/or cytoplasm, and its clinicopathological significance associated with patient's outcome.

PATIENTS AND METHODS

Patients' demography and tumour specimens

This study was performed with the approval of the Internal Review Board on ethical issues of Hokkaido University Hospital, Sapporo,

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Received 6 February 2012; revised 25 April 2012; accepted 29 April 2012; published online 29 May 2012

Japan. The subjects of this study were 110 patients who underwent radical surgery for primary gastric cancer between 2002 and 2004 at the Department of General Surgery, Hokkaido University, Graduate School of Medicine, Sapporo, Japan. The clinicopathological characteristics of these cases are summarised in Supplementary Table 1.

Mean patient age was 62.1 years (± 2.4 standard deviation (s.d.)). Seventy patients (63.6%) were men, and the remaining 40 (36.4%) were women. The location of the tumour was the upper third of the stomach in 38 (34.5%) patients and the middle and lower third in 72 (65.5%). Tumour stages comprising T factor, N factor, M factor, clinical stage were assigned according to the TNM classification of the Union Internationale Contre le Cancer (Sobin and Wittekind, 2002). Lymphatic permeation and blood vessel invasion were evaluated as either positive or negative. The median survival time of the patients was 54.8 months (± 5.2 s.d.).

Formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded tissue blocks were prepared from patient's tumour specimens, and sections were cut and stained with haematoxylin and eosin (HE) for routine histopathological examination. All specimens were diagnosed as gastric adenocarcinomas, and lymphatic permeation and blood vessel invasion were evaluated using Elastica van Gieson staining and immunostaining with anti-podoplanin (D2-40) antibody, if necessary, as a routine operation for pathological diagnosis. A representative tissue block including metastatic lymph node was selected from each case to perform immunohistochemical studies.

Immunohistochemistry

Four-micrometre-thick sections were mounted on charged glass slides, deparaffinised, and rehydrated through a graded ethanol series. For antigen retrieval, Dako Target Retrieval Solution pH 9.0 (Catalogue number S2368) was used, and the slides were boiled in a pressure cooker (Pascal Pressure Cooker, Model: S2800; DAKO JAPAN, Tokyo, Japan) to a temperature of 125 °C for 3 min. Endogenous peroxidase was blocked with 0.3% hydrogen peroxidase. The slides were incubated with a 1:50 dilution of a mouse monoclonal antibody to mesothelin (clone 5B2 diluted 1:50; Novocastra, Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK) at room temperature for 30 min and then reacted with a dextran polymer reagent combined with secondary antibodies and peroxidase (Envision/HRP; Dako) for 30 min at room temperature. Specific antigen-antibody reactions were visualised with 0.2% diaminobenzine tetrahydrochloride and hydrogen peroxide. Slides were counterstained with haematoxylin for 10 min, then rinsed gently in reagent quality water.

Immunohistochemical evaluation

All assessments were made on the tumour region of the specimen ($\times 400$). Each slide was evaluated independently by two pathologists (TE, KT) who did not know the clinical outcomes.

Immunostaining for mesothelin was evaluated for both the proportion and staining intensity of tumour cells in each case. The proportion of mesothelin expression was assessed according to the percentage of mesothelin-positive cells as follows: +1, 1–10%; +2, 10–50%; and +3, >50%. The staining intensity of mesothelin was evaluated as weak (+1), moderate to strong (+2) in addition to the staining localisation in the luminal membrane or in cytoplasm. The final evaluation of mesothelin expression was assessed using the following scoring system according to the previous study for the pancreas cancer (Einama *et al*, 2011): 'mesothelin positive' was defined as greater than or equal to +4 of proportion score and/or +2 of intensity score, while 'mesothelin negative' was given when the total score was less than +3 except in the cases of proportion score +1 and intensity score +2 (Supplementary Figure 1).

Furthermore, among the 'mesothelin-positive' cases, the staining localisation of mesothelin was evaluated as luminal membrane and/or cytoplasm. In cases in which the entire circumference of the luminal membrane was explicitly stained even in partial throughout the section, 'luminal membrane positive' was given. When the luminal membrane was stained discontinuously and/or faintly, or in cases in which no membrane staining and only cytoplasmic staining was observed in any intensity level throughout the section, 'luminal membrane negative' was given (Figure 1; Supplementary Figure 1). Meanwhile, the mesothelin cytoplasmic expression was

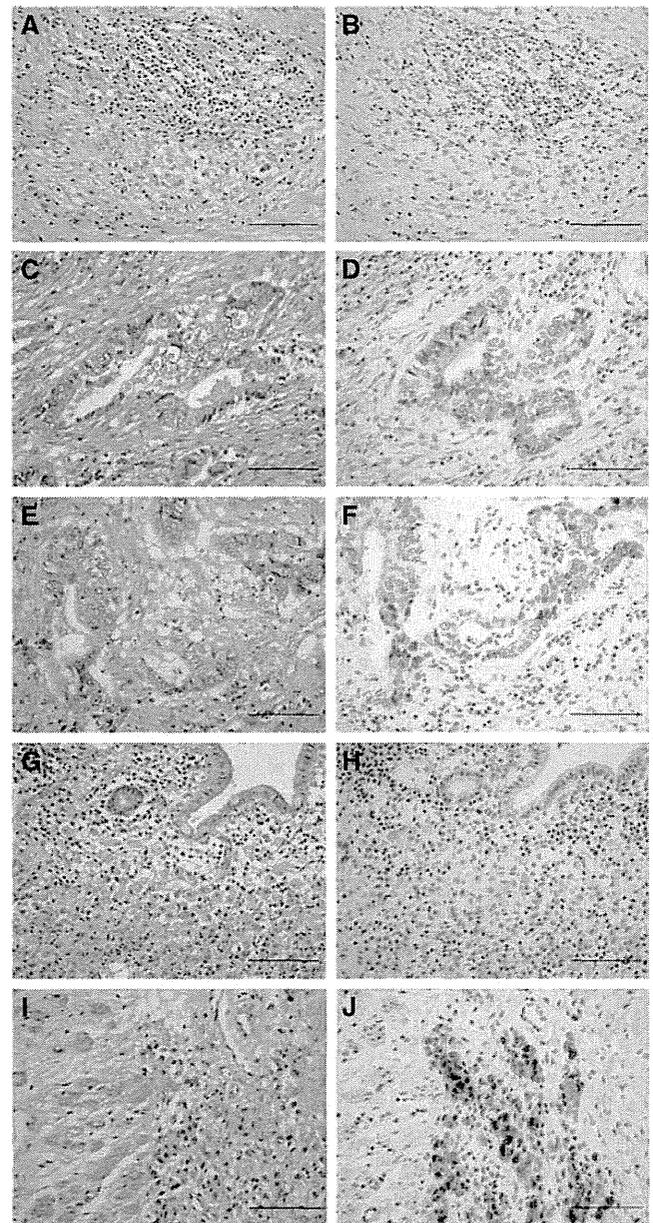


Figure 1 The expression variations of mesothelin and its cellular localisation in gastric cancer. (A, C, E, G, and I) HE stain. (B, D, F, H, and J) Immunohistochemical stain for mesothelin. (A and B) A case of 'mesothelin negative'. (C and D) A case of 'luminal membrane negative', although there was incomplete membrane staining in the cancer cells. (E and F) A case of 'luminal membrane positive'. The entire circumference staining of the cell membrane was stained. (G and H) A case of 'cytoplasmic positive' that represented the scant cytoplasmic staining of mesothelin. (I and J) A case of 'cytoplasmic positive' with granular staining in cancer cells. Scale bars: 100 μ m.

evaluated as follows: in a case in which the cytoplasmic staining was clearly observed in the constituent cancer cells, including the cytoplasmic granular staining, we judged it as 'cytoplasmic positive' (Figure 1).

Statistical analysis

We used χ^2 test or Fisher's exact test to determine the correlation between mesothelin and clinicopathological data. Survival curves of patients were drawn by the Kaplan–Meier method. Differences in survival curves were analysed by the log-rank test. Prognostic implications of mesothelin expression and clinicopathological

parameters were analysed by Cox univariate and multivariate proportional hazards models. All differences were considered significant at a *P*-value of <0.05. All statistical analyses were performed using Statview 5.0 software (SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA).

RESULTS

Clinicopathological analysis for mesothelin expression

In the 110 gastric cancers, mesothelin expression was detected in 49 cases (44.5%), and the luminal membrane expression of

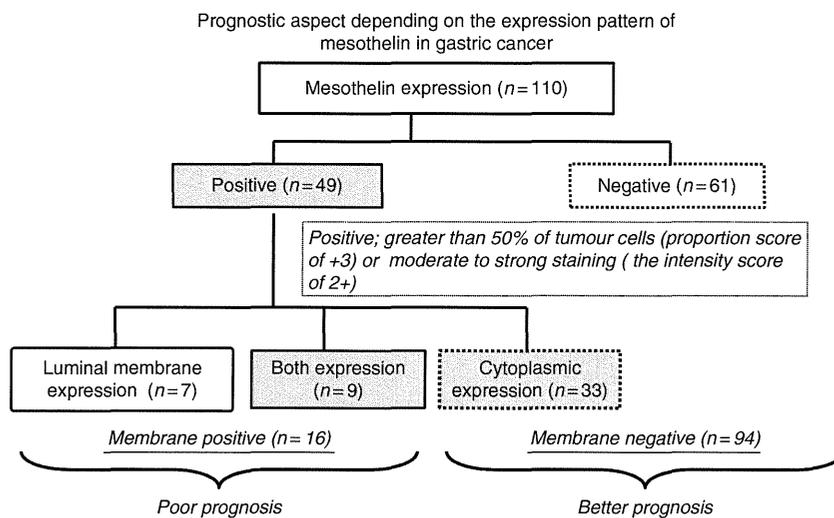


Figure 2 Flow chart of evaluation of mesothelin expression.

Table 1 Association between expression pattern of mesothelin and clinicopathological parameters

Parameter	Total	Mesothelin expression			Luminal membrane expression			Cytoplasmic expression		
		Positive (n=49)	Negative (n=61)	P-value	Positive (n=16)	Negative (n=94)	P-value	Positive (n=42)	Negative (n=68)	P-value
1. Histological classification										
por2-sig	62	25	37	>0.99	8	54	0.60	22	40	0.56
Others	48	24	24		8	40		20	28	
2. pT factor										
pT1	62	23	39	0.085	3	59	0.0019	21	41	0.33
pT2–4	48	26	22		13	35		21	27	
3. pN factor										
Positive	37	22	15	0.028	11	26	0.0029	17	20	0.30
Negative	73	27	46		5	68		25	48	
4. pStage										
I, II	80	34	46	0.52	5	75	0.0002	35	48	0.66
III, IV	30	15	15		11	19		10	20	
5. Lymphatic permeation										
Positive	48	25	23	0.18	13	35	0.0019	20	28	0.56
Negative	62	24	38		3	59		22	40	
6. Blood vessel permeation										
Positive	41	21	20	0.32	11	30	0.0098	16	25	>0.99
Negative	69	28	41		5	64		26	43	
7. Recurrence										
Yes	26	14	12	0.37	11	15	<0.0001	9	17	0.82
No	84	35	49		5	79		33	51	

mesothelin was observed in 16 cases, while the cytoplasmic expression was detected in 42 tumours, which included the 9 cases of 'positive for both luminal membrane and cytoplasm' (Figure 2). The detailed clinicopathological information of 16 cases with mesothelin luminal membrane expression was summarised in Supplementary Table 2. We never detected the mesothelin expression in the non-cancerous lesions (data not shown). The statistical analysis revealed that the incidence of mesothelin expression was only correlated with lymph-node metastasis ($P=0.028$), while the incidence of luminal membrane expression of mesothelin was correlated with pT factor ($P=0.0019$), lymph-node metastasis ($P=0.0029$), clinical stage ($P=0.0002$), lymphatic permeation ($P=0.0019$), blood vessel invasion ($P=0.0098$), and recurrence ($P<0.0001$). There were no significant correlations between mesothelin cytoplasmic expression and clinicopathological parameters (Table 1).

Survival analysis associated with mesothelin expression

The analysis for patients' overall survival denoted that the group of 'luminal membrane positive' for mesothelin indicated a significantly unfavourable outcome compared with the group of 'luminal membrane negative' ($P<0.001$). On the other hand, the pure mesothelin expression regardless of the localisation, and also 'cytoplasmic expression' were not correlated with the overall survival of the patients (Figure 3). To confirm the mesothelin expression as an independent prognostic factor, we performed the univariate analysis of the 110 gastric cancers using the Cox proportional hazards model, and obtained the result that pT factor, pN factor, clinical stage, lymphatic permeation, blood vessel invasion, and mesothelin luminal membrane expression were significantly correlated with the risk of cancer death (Table 2). Furthermore, to exclude the possible interference of any other factors, the multivariate analysis was performed including pT factor, pN factor, clinical stage, lymphatic permeation, blood vessel invasion, and mesothelin luminal membrane expression. Interestingly, the luminal membrane expression of mesothelin was an independent predictor of overall survival for gastric cancer patients as well as clinical stage and lymphatic permeation (Table 3).

Mesothelin expression in metastatic lymph nodes

As shown above, luminal membrane expression of mesothelin was correlated with lymphatic permeation and lymph-node metastasis; thus, we analysed the expression pattern of mesothelin in 35 out of 37 cases of lymph-node metastasis by immunohistochemistry, in which the tissue blocks of metastatic lymph node were available (Supplementary Figure 2). Interestingly, the incidence of luminal membrane positive including expression in both membrane and cytoplasm was increased in metastatic lymph nodes (51.4%; 18 out of 35) compared with primary lesions (31.4%; 11 out of 35). Moreover, in 4 cases out of 14 mesothelin-negative cases in primary lesion, luminal membrane expression of mesothelin was observed. These results support our idea that luminal membrane expression of mesothelin is associated with the malignant behaviour of tumour cells.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we demonstrated that the luminal membrane expression of mesothelin in gastric cancer was associated with unfavourable clinical outcome in patients after surgery. The univariate analysis indicated that the luminal membrane expression of mesothelin was also correlated with lymph-node metastasis, clinical stage, lymphatic permeation, blood vessel invasion, residual tumour, and recurrence, although a luminal

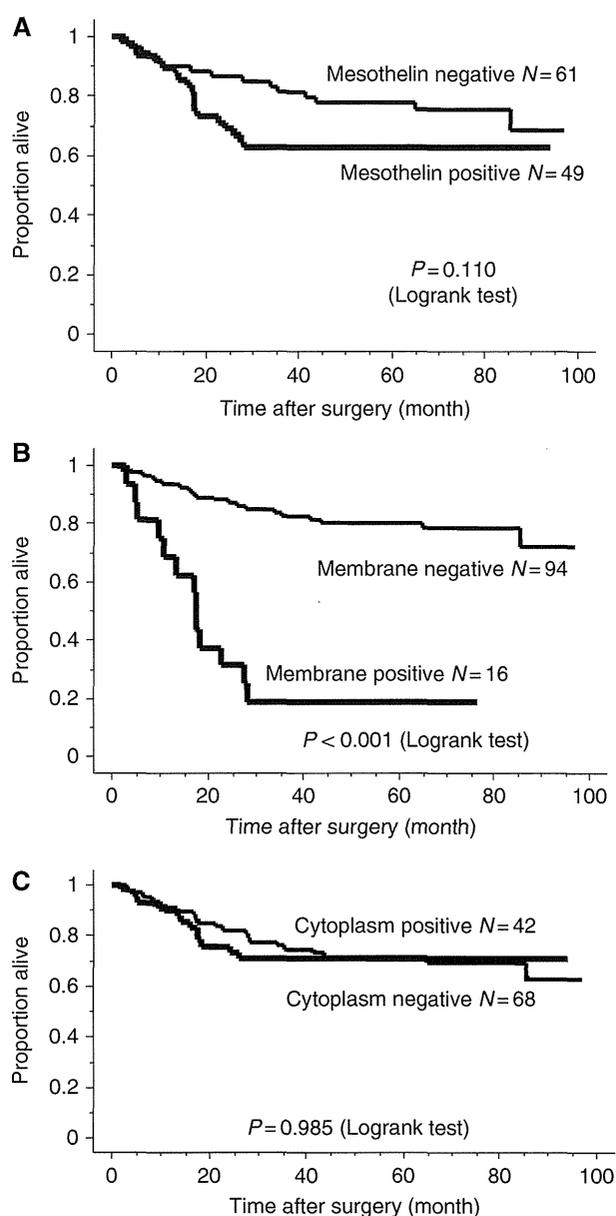


Figure 3 Overall survival for patients with gastric cancer after surgical therapy stratified by the status of mesothelin expression (A), mesothelin luminal membrane expression (B), and mesothelin cytoplasmic expression (C), respectively. The group of 'luminal membrane positive' represented a statistically significantly unfavourable outcome compared with the group of 'luminal membrane negative' (B: $P<0.001$). On the other hand, both total expression (A) and cytoplasmic expression of mesothelin (C) were not correlated with overall survival of the patients.

membrane expression of mesothelin remained a statistically independent factor for favourable patient outcome after the multivariate analysis. Our result that total mesothelin expression including the case of exclusive cytoplasmic expression did not correlate with patients' prognosis will explain the discrepant previous report in which mesothelin expression correlates with prolonged patient survival in gastric cancer (Baba *et al*, 2011). We therefore emphasise that membrane-localised mesothelin might have an important role in the development of gastric cancer.

The full length of human *mesothelin* gene codes the primary product being a 71-kDa precursor protein. It can be

Table 2 Univariate analysis for clinicopathological parameters and mesothelin expression on overall survival of patients with gastric carcinoma

Factor	N	P	RR (95% CI)
1. <i>Histological classification</i>			
por2-sig	62	0.89	I
Others	48		0.954 (0.478–1.903)
2. <i>pT factor</i>			
pT1	62	<0.0001	I
pT2–4	48		13.354 (4.679–38.113)
3. <i>pN factor</i>			
Positive	73	<0.0001	I
Negative	37		9.301 (4.147–20.860)
4. <i>pStage</i>			
I, II	80	<0.0001	I
III, IV	30		18.837 (8.032–44.179)
5. <i>Lymphatic permeation</i>			
Positive	62	<0.0001	I
Negative	48		18.529 (5.637–60.534)
6. <i>Blood vessel permeation</i>			
Positive	69	<0.0001	I
Negative	41		11.493 (4.722–27.971)
7. <i>Mesothelin expression</i>			
No	61	<0.0001	I
Yes	49		1.749 (0.874–3.500)
8. <i>Luminal membrane expression</i>			
No	94	<0.0001	I
Yes	16		7.205 (3.489–14.877)
9. <i>Cytoplasmic expression</i>			
No	68	0.98	I
Yes	42		1.007 (0.493–2.055)

Abbreviation: CI = confidence interval. RR indicates relative risk/hazard ratio.

physiologically cleaved by some furin-like proteases into a 40-kDa C-terminal fragment that remains membrane bound, and a 31-kDa N-terminal fragment, which is secreted into the blood (Chang and Pastan, 1996). The C-terminal 40-kDa fragment is referred to as mesothelin, which is attached to the cell membrane by a GPI anchor (Chang and Pastan, 1996; Hassan *et al*, 2004). The 5B2 anti-mesothelin antibody (Novocastra Laboratory Vision BioSystems, Boston, MA, USA), which we employed here for IHC, can detect the 71-kDa precursor protein and also the 40-kDa C-terminal fragment (Inami *et al*, 2008); therefore, we could not decide which form of mesothelin has a pivotal role in malignant behaviour of gastric cancer cells. Recent studies reported that mesothelin is not only associated with increased cell proliferation and with the migration of pancreatic cancer cells *in vitro* (Bharadwaj *et al*, 2008; Li *et al*, 2008), but also contributes to tumour progression *in vivo* (Li *et al*, 2008). Mesothelin inhibits paclitaxel-induced apoptosis through concomitant activation of phosphoinositide-3-kinase (PI3K) signalling in the regulation of Bcl-2 family expression (Chang *et al*, 2009), and induces the activation of signal transducer and activator of transcription (Stat) 3, which leads to increased expression of cyclin E and makes pancreatic cancer cells proliferate faster (Bharadwaj *et al*, 2008). In addition, mesothelin-activated nuclear factor-kappaB (NF-κB) induces elevated interleukin (IL)-6 expression, which acts as a growth factor to support pancreatic cancer cell survival/proliferation through a novel auto/paracrine IL-6/soluble IL-6R trans-signalling

Table 3 Multivariate analysis for clinicopathological parameters and mesothelin expression on overall survival of patients with gastric carcinoma

Factor	P	RR (95% CI)
1. <i>pT factor</i>		
pT1 vs pT2–4	0.35	2.497 (0.374–16.660)
2. <i>pN factor</i>		
Positive vs Negative	0.060	3.532 (0.946–13.181)
3. <i>pStage</i>		
I, II vs III, IV	0.0003	12.336 (2.533–60.069)
4. <i>Lymphatic permeation</i>		
Positive vs Negative	0.0043	11.996 (2.180–65.996)
5. <i>Blood vessel permeation</i>		
Positive vs Negative	0.29	2.091 (0.533–8.195)
6. <i>Luminal membrane expression</i>		
No vs Yes	0.0073	2.969 (1.341–6.573)

Abbreviation: CI = confidence interval. RR indicates relative risk/hazard ratio.

(Bharadwaj *et al*, 2011a, b). Our study provided a new aspect that luminal membrane expression of mesothelin is associated with the malignant behaviour of tumour cells, such as depth of tumour invasion and vascular invasion, although it remains necessary to clarify the biological function of the 71-kDa mesothelin precursor and/or 40-kDa mesothelin protein in *in-vitro* and *in-vivo* studies, including the processing system by furin-like proteases.

In terms of discovering the clinicopathological parameters for gastric cancer, there are many previous studies demonstrating the prognostic significance of various molecules, such as epidermal growth factor receptor and c-erbB-2 (HER-2). These molecules also could be of unique significance as the indicators of eligibility to specific molecular targeting therapies, because most of them are located in the cell membrane as the useful targets for the molecular targeted drugs such as antibody drugs. We believe that the immunohistochemical evaluation for luminal membrane expression of mesothelin in gastric cancer would be of clinical benefit not only as a prognostic factor but also as a predictive factor for the eligibility to mesothelin-targeting therapies in the future (Hassan *et al*, 2004, 2007a, b, c, 2010; Hassan and Ho, 2008; Li *et al*, 2008; Inami *et al*, 2009).

In conclusion, we demonstrated the clinicopathological significance of the luminal membrane expression of mesothelin in gastric cancer as an independent prognostic factor, although additional studies to increase the number of the cases for luminal membrane expression ($n=16$) might be required for further confirmation. The immunohistochemical examination of mesothelin expression in surgically resected tumour specimens should be clinically useful for prognostication and for decision making about further treatment procedures after surgical therapy in patients with gastric cancer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported in part by a grant-in-aid from the foundation for the Department of General Surgery, Hokkaido University Alumni Association.

Supplementary Information accompanies the paper on British Journal of Cancer website (<http://www.nature.com/bjc>)

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The long-term outcomes of patients with hepatocellular carcinoma after living donor liver transplantation: a comparison of right and left lobe grafts

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Received: 16 May 2011 / Accepted: 16 May 2011 / Published online: 14 January 2012
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Abstract

Purpose The feasibility of living donor liver transplantation (LDLT) using left lobe (LL) grafts has been demonstrated. However, the long-term outcome of the hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) patients with LL grafts has not been elucidated. The aim of this study was to analyze the long-term outcomes after LDLT for HCC according to the graft type.

Methods A retrospective analysis was performed evaluating the outcomes of LL graft recipients ($n = 82$) versus recipients of RL grafts ($n = 46$). The analysis endpoints were the overall and recurrence-free survival after LDLT. The demographics of both recipients and donors, and the tumor characteristics associated with the graft type were also analyzed.

Results The graft volume (436 ± 74 g), as well as the graft volume-standard liver volume rate ($38.3 \pm 6.2\%$) of the LL graft group were significantly decreased as compared to those of the RL graft group (569 ± 82 g, $46.3 \pm 6.7\%$; $p < 0.01$). The 1-, 3-, 5- and 7-year overall survival rates of the LL graft group were 88.2, 80.2, 75.7 and 72.4%, respectively, which were not significantly different compared to those of the RL graft group (95.4, 87.3, 87.3 and 87.3%). The recurrence-free survival rates of the LL graft group (89.1% at 1 year, 78.8% at 3 years, 75.8% at 5 years and 70.3% at 7 years) were similar to those of the RL graft group (88.6, 88.6, 88.6 and 88.6%). The mean

peak postoperative total bilirubin levels and duration of hospital stay after surgery for the LL grafting donors were significantly decreased as compared to those of the RL grafting donors ($p < 0.01$). The rate of severe complications (over Clavien's IIIa) associated with LL graft procurement was 6.2%, which was lower than that in the RL graft group (15.6%).

Conclusions The long-term outcomes in the HCC patients with LL grafts were similar to those of patients receiving RL grafts, and the outcomes of the donors of LL grafts were more favorable. Therefore, LL grafts should be considered when selecting LDLT for HCC to ensure donor safety.

Keywords Surgery · Hepatocellular carcinoma · Recurrence · Living donor liver transplantation · Graft type

Abbreviations

AFP	Alpha-fetoprotein
CL	Caudate lobe
CT	Computed tomography
DCP	Des-gamma-carboxy prothrombin
DDLT	Deceased donor liver transplantation
GRWR	Graft-recipient weight ratio
HCC	Hepatocellular carcinoma
HCV	Hepatitis C virus
LDLT	Living donor liver transplantation
LL	Left lobe
LT	Liver transplantation
MMF	Mycophenolate mofetil
RL	Right lobe
RV	Remnant liver volume
SLV	Standard liver volume
TLV	Total liver volume

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Introduction

Living donor liver transplantation (LDLT) is currently the treatment of choice for unresectable hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC; 1, 2). A large survey of 49 centers in Japan including a total of 653 patients with HCC has been reported [1]. A postoperative pathological study showed that the 5-year disease-free survival of those who met ($n = 325$) and exceeded ($n = 272$) the Milan criteria were 95.3 and 66.4%, respectively. Therefore, LDLT for patients with HCC within the Milan criteria can also achieve an acceptable outcome comparable to the outcome for deceased donor liver transplantation (DDLT) for HCC. Some DDLT centers have expanded the selection criteria, like up-to-seven criteria, because of concerns that the Milan criteria are too stringent [2, 3]. The expanded criteria are also proposed by some LDLT high-volume centers in Japan [4–6]. Tumor markers, such as alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) or des-gamma-carboxy prothrombin (DCP), in addition to the tumor size and the number of tumors, are useful to properly rate the candidate without decreasing the long-term survival after liver transplantation (LT). Therefore, LDLT has been established as a treatment choice for HCC.

Living donor liver transplantation using right lobe (RL) grafts has gained widespread acceptance, whereas the use of left lobe (LL) grafts for adults has been severely limited because of their size limitation. On the other hand, some centers have limited LDLT between adults to LL grafting, arguing that RL donation involves unacceptable risks [7]. Donor selection criteria have been established based on graft liver volume (GV) and the remnant liver volume (RV) of the donor, as calculated using three-dimensional computed tomography (CT), and the LL is considered to be the first choice for the graft [8].

There is a potential risk for HCC after LDLT due to the rapid liver regeneration that occurs in the immediate post-LDLT period, which could lead to cancer progression in these patients, which in turn, could lead to early or multiple-site recurrence [9]. However, the long-term outcome of the HCC patients treated with LL grafts has not yet been elucidated.

The aim of this study was to compare the long-term and recurrence-free survival rates between recipients of LL and RL grafts.

Patients and methods

Three hundred forty-six LDLT procedures for HCC were performed at Kyushu University Hospital, Fukuoka, Japan, from July 1995 and November 2009, after prior approval from the Ethics and Indications Committee of Kyushu University. One hundred twenty-eight adult-to-adult LDLT

for HCC were included in this study. The selection criteria for the HCC patients were [10] no modality except LDLT available to cure the patients with HCC and end-stage liver disease, [4] no extra-hepatic metastasis, [1] no major vascular infiltration, such as the portal vein or hepatic vein, which ensures that there was no restriction on the tumor size or the number of tumors.

The transplant procedures for both the donors and recipients have been described previously [11–13]. The immunosuppressive regimen was a combination of a calcineurin inhibitor (tacrolimus or cyclosporine) and steroids, with or without mycophenolate mofetil (MMF). Basiliximab (20 mg) was given intravenously within 6 h after graft reperfusion and on postoperative day 4. A steroid injection was given intraoperatively (methylprednisolone 1 g) and tapered to zero by day 7. Maintenance immunosuppression therapy was conducted with low-dose tacrolimus or cyclosporine from postoperative day 7.

Donor evaluation and selection

The general selection criteria for grafts in adult-to-adult LDLT based on volumetric analysis have been described previously [8]. Briefly, the LL is initially considered for the graft and is generally used. The RL is chosen if the estimated LL with the caudate lobe (CL) volume of the donor is less than 35% of the SLV of the recipient. The person will be excluded as a donor candidate if the RV is less than 35% of the total liver volume (TLV). A biopsy of the donor liver is performed if the CT or ultrasonography study shows the possibility of steatosis, or if the donor's body mass index is greater than 25.

Patient follow-up

The clinical follow-up of patients who underwent HCC followed a strict protocol, which did not change during the study period. The patients were seen bi-weekly for the first month and then monthly for 6 months. The patients underwent ultrasound and enhanced CT examinations at 6 month intervals. Hepatic angiography, bone scintigraphy, or a thoracic CT examination was also performed if there was deterioration in the graft function, or an increase in the AFP or DCP level was noted. The mean follow-up period of the RL and LL graft groups was 3.63 and 3.52 years, respectively.

Statistical analysis

All statistical analyses were performed using the StatView[®] 5.0 software package (Abacus Concepts, Berkeley, CA, USA). The continuous variables were compared using the Mann–Whitney *U* test. All variables were expressed as

the means \pm SD. The categorical data were compared using the Chi-square test. A logistic regression analysis was performed to identify the independent variables for postoperative complications. The differences were considered to be significant if $p < 0.05$.

Results

Recipients and tumor characteristics according to the graft type

The clinical parameters of the recipients were compared between the two groups according to the graft type (Table 1). Males were predominant in the RL group. The mean age of the LL group was significantly higher than that in the RL group ($p < 0.05$). The rate of patients with a Child-Pugh classification of “C” in the RL group was significantly higher than that in the LL group ($p < 0.05$). The graft volume (436 ± 74 g), as well as the graft volume-standard liver volume rate ($38.3 \pm 6.2\%$), of the LL graft group was significantly lower than that in the RL graft group (569 ± 82 g, $46.3 \pm 6.7\%$; $p < 0.01$). Although the duration of surgery of the RL graft group was significantly longer than that of the LL graft group, the intraoperative blood loss was similar in the two groups. The mean length of warm and cold ischemia in the RL group (44 ± 12 , 125 ± 66 min) was significantly longer than those of the LL group (38 ± 12 , 57 ± 26 min). No difference was found between the two groups with regard to the hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection rate, alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) and DCP levels, number of tumors, maximum tumor size, TNM stage, and Milan classification. There were also no differences in the histological tumor differentiation and vascular invasion between the groups.

Survival after LDLT according to the graft type

The 1-, 3-, 5- and 7-year overall survival rates of the LL graft group were 88.2, 80.2, 75.7 and 72.4%, respectively, which were not significantly different in comparison to those of the RL graft group (95.4, 87.3, 87.3 and 87.3%, Fig. 1a). The recurrence-free survival rates of the LL graft group (89.1% at 1 year, 78.8% at 3 years, 75.8% at 5 years and 70.3% at 7 years) were also similar to those of the RL graft group (88.6, 88.6, 88.6 and 88.6, Fig. 1b). Patients demonstrating scores beyond the Milan criteria tend to show worse outcomes with LDLT in comparison to DDLT [14], thus, the survival of patients classified beyond the Milan criteria in the current series were also compared based on the graft type. The 1-, 3-, and 5-year overall survival rates of the patients beyond the Milan criteria of

Table 1 Recipient and tumor characteristics according to the graft type

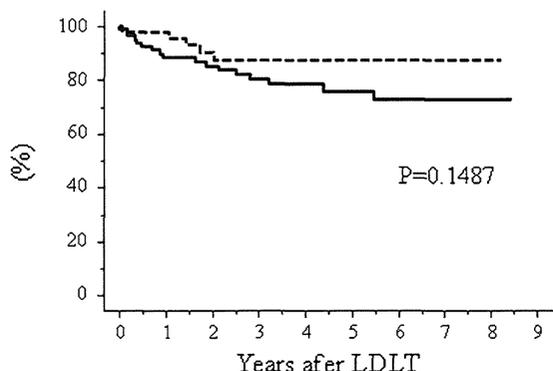
Factors	RL graft (<i>n</i> = 46)	LL graft (<i>n</i> = 82)	<i>p</i> value
Gender			
male (%)	73.9	53.7	0.0242
Age (years) ^a	54.6 \pm 6.8	58.7 \pm 7.9	0.0034
Hepatitis			
HCV/non-HCV	32/14	63/19	0.3673
Child-Pugh classification			
A/B/C	1/14/31	8/37/37	0.0341
GV (g) ^a	569 \pm 82	436 \pm 74	<0.0001
GV/SLV (%) ^a	46.3 \pm 6.7	38.3 \pm 6.2	<0.0001
Length of operation (min) ^a	903 \pm 199	772 \pm 143	<0.0001
Intraoperative blood loss (ml) ^a	7027 \pm 5541	8121 \pm 25134	0.7717
Length of warm ischemia (min) ^a	44 \pm 12	38 \pm 12	0.0038
Length of cold ischemia (min) ^a	125 \pm 66	57 \pm 26	<0.0001
AFP (ng/ml)			
<300/ \geq 300	40/6	66/16	0.3520
DCP (mAU/ml)			
<300/ \geq 300	37/9	66/16	0.9942
Number of tumors			
\leq 3/ $>$ 3	34/12	49/33	0.1075
Tumor size (cm)	2.2 \pm 1.3	2.6 \pm 1.3	0.1282
Type of HCC			
Initial/recurrent	31/15	54/28	0.8597
Stage			
I/II/III	8/14/21	8/25/45	0.3942
Milan criteria			
Yes/no	29/17	43/39	0.2459
Tumor differentiation (histological)			
Well/mod/por	3/28/14	8/48/26	0.8231
Vascular invasion (histological)			
Yes/no	20/26	33/49	0.7215

AFP alpha-fetoprotein, DCP des-gamma-carboxy prothrombin, GV graft volume, GV/SLV graft volume versus standard liver volume ratio, HCV hepatitis C virus

^a Mean value \pm standard deviation

the LL graft group ($n = 39$) were 81.7, 70.1 and 65.7%, respectively, which were not significantly different in comparison to those of the patients beyond the Milan criteria in the RL graft group ($n = 17$, 94.1, 73.9 and 73.9%, Fig. 2a). The recurrence-free survival rates of the patients beyond the Milan criteria in the LL graft group (78.7% at 1 year, 65.7% at 3 years and 61.0% at 5 years) were similar to those of the patients beyond the Milan criteria in the RL graft group (74.0, 74.0 and 74.0%, Fig. 2b).

(a) Overall survival after LDLT according to the graft type



(b) Recurrence-free survival after LDLT according to the graft type

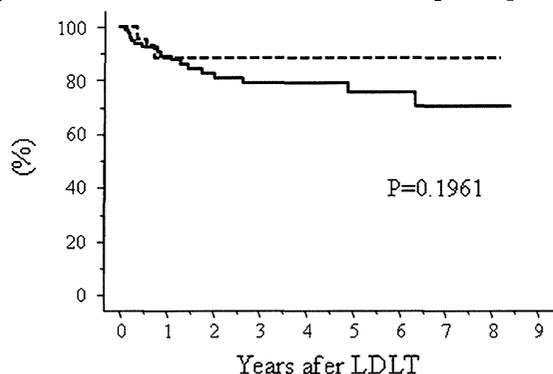


Fig. 1 The overall (a) or recurrence-free (b) survival after LDLT for 82 patients with LL grafts (continuous line) and 46 patients with RL grafts (dotted line)

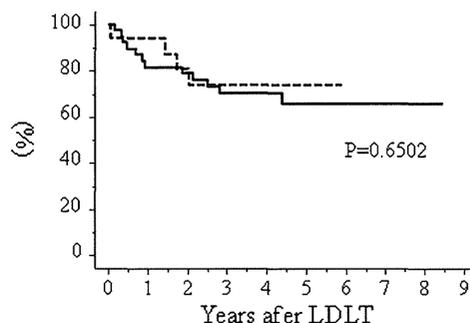
Donor characteristics according to the graft type

The clinical parameters of the donors were compared between the two groups according to the graft type (Table 2). Males were predominant in the LL group. No difference was found in the duration of the operation and intraoperative blood loss between the groups. The RV ratio of the RL graft group ($45.2 \pm 6.3\%$) was significantly lower than that of the LL graft group ($64.4 \pm 6.2\%$, < 0.0001). The mean peak postoperative total bilirubin levels and duration of hospital stay after surgery of the LL grafting donors were significantly decreased as compared to those of the RL graft donors ($p < 0.01$). The rate of complications over Clavien’s IIIa after the LL graft procurement was 6.2%, which was lower than that in the RL graft group (15.6%).

Discussion

The factors involved in liver regeneration may stimulate the growth of occult tumors, thus leading to questions regarding the implications of the type of graft on the disease process and outcome. Donor selection criteria have

(a) Overall survival after LDLT over Milan according to the graft type



(b) Recurrence-free survival after LDLT over Milan according to the graft type

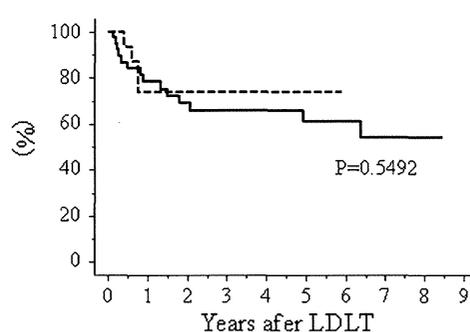


Fig. 2 The overall (a) or recurrence-free (b) survival after LDLT for 39 patients who were classified beyond the Milan criteria treated with LL grafts (continuous line) and 17 patients beyond the Milan criteria treated with RL grafts (dotted line)

Table 2 The donor characteristics according to the graft type

Factors	RL graft (n = 46)	LL graft (n = 82)	p value
Gender (% male)	52.2	79.3	0.0014
Age (years) ^a	36.0 ± 11.0	32.4 ± 8.7	0.0448
Length of operation (min) ^a	445 ± 62	440 ± 73	0.7353
Intraoperative blood loss (ml) ^a	356 ± 305	370 ± 242	0.7807
RV ratio (%) ^a	45.2 ± 6.3	64.4 ± 6.2	<0.0001
Peak ALT (IU/l) ^a	679 ± 351	558 ± 246	0.0247
Peak TB (mg/dl) ^a	3.1 ± 1.6	2.3 ± 1.3	0.0015
Hospital stay (days) ^a	16.7 ± 9.3	11.1 ± 3.5	<0.0001
All complications	13 (28.3)	23 (28.0)	0.9796
Complications over Clavien’s II	7 (15.6)	5 (6.2)	0.0856

ALT alanine aminotransferase, LL left lobe, RL right lobe, RV remnant liver volume, TB total bilirubin

^a Mean ± standard deviation

been established based on the GV and the RV of the donor calculated using three-dimensional-CT, in which an LL graft is considered to be the first choice to ensure donor safety. However, the long-term outcome of the HCC

patients treated with LL grafts has not been elucidated. Thus, the aim of this study was to compare the long-term outcomes between the recipients of LL and RL grafts. Our results showed that the overall survival and recurrence-free survival rates of the LL graft group were similar to those of the RL graft group, although the graft volume of the LL graft group was significantly lower than that of the RL graft group. Furthermore, the overall survival and recurrence-free survival rates after LDLT of the patients beyond the Milan criteria were comparable between the two groups.

It has been unclear whether the rapid liver regeneration after LT can affect the recurrence of HCC. Interestingly, Shi et al. [15] reported experimental data about hepatectomy performed in rats with concomitant implantation of hepatoma cells in the remnant liver. The tumor volume and number increased significantly with the size of the partial hepatectomy, and the largest resections were also associated with increased hepatoma cell infiltration in the lungs. These findings suggest that the liver regeneration after partial hepatectomy may facilitate growth and malignant transformation of microscopic HCC. On the other hand, Hwang et al. [16] showed clinical data about the influence of the graft-recipient weight ratio (GRWR) to assess the risk of HCC recurrence during liver regeneration. The authors divided 181 LT recipients with HCC into four groups according to their GRWR: low GRWR (<0.8), mid GRWR (0.8–1.0), high GRWR (>1.0), and whole liver graft group (>1.5), and found no significant differences in the overall patient survival and recurrence-free survival among these four groups. Therefore, the question of whether liver regeneration influences HCC recurrence remains controversial.

There have been several reports comparing LDLT versus DDLT for HCC [14, 17, 18]. For example, Bhangui et al. [14] performed a comparative intention-to-treat analysis of the recurrence rates and survival outcomes after LDLT and DDLT in HCC patients. The authors reported that the recurrence rates in the two groups were similar (12.9 and 12.7%), and that there was a trend toward a longer time to recurrence after LDLT (38 ± 27 vs. 16 ± 13 months). Furthermore, the overall survival in the two groups was comparable on an intention-to-treat basis. In addition, the outcomes of the 312 HCC patients who underwent LT at 4 Korean institutions were evaluated [17]. A comparison of HCC recurrence curves did not reveal any statistically significant difference between LDLT and DDLT. The current study revealed that the overall survival and recurrence-free survival rates of the LL graft group were similar to those of the RL graft group. There were differences of about 10% in the GV/SLV and about 130 g for the graft volume between the LL and RL grafts, thus resulting in significant differences in the liver regeneration ratio after LDLT. Nonetheless, the type of graft did not

affect the long-term outcome after LDLT for the HCC patients in our study. These findings might suggest that rapid liver regeneration does not affect the HCC recurrence after LT.

There have been at least 19 donor deaths associated with LDLT donation [19]. Extensive donor evaluation, detailed preoperative planning, and meticulous surgical technique are essential to minimize donor complications and to avoid donor death. LL grafting, which provides only 30–50% of the required liver volume, has been thought to be inadequate to sustain the metabolic demands of adult recipients. Furthermore, an at least 40–45% graft volume is usually required in the presence of severe portal hypertension. Subsequently, LDLT using RL grafts has gained widespread acceptance. However, the feasibility of LDLT using LL grafts between adults to ensure the safety of the donor has been demonstrated [11]. The current study showed that LL graft procurement was less invasive as compared to RL graft procurement, thus resulting in a lower rate of complications for the donors. LL grafts should therefore be considered more favorably when selecting donors in LDLT for HCC, since the long-term outcomes in the HCC patients with LL grafts were similar to those with RL grafts.

Acknowledgments We thank Professor Brian Quinn for his review of this manuscript.

Conflict of interest None of the authors has any conflict of interest.

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Liver Transplant From an ABO-Incompatible and Hepatitis C Antibody-Positive *but an HCV-RNA Negative* Living Donor in a Familial Amyloid Polyneuropathy Patient

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Abstract

Familial amyloid polyneuropathy is a rare, progressively disabling, and ultimately fatal inherited disease. Liver transplant is currently the only available treatment proven to halt the progression of familial amyloid polyneuropathy. We report a 31-year-old woman with familial amyloid polyneuropathy who received a living-donor liver transplant from her husband who was hepatitis C virus antibody-positive *but HCV-RNA negative* and ABO incompatible. Six years after the transplant, both donor and recipient have normal liver biochemistry results; no hepatitis C viral load has been detectable in the recipient. This is the first report of a living ABO-incompatible liver transplant from an anti-hepatitis C virus antibody-positive *but an HCV-RNA negative* donor. This experience suggests that the use of an anti-hepatitis C virus antibody-positive hepatic graft is possible in select circumstances.

Key words: *Familial amyloid polyneuropathy, Hepatitis C virus, Living-donor liver transplant, ABO-incompatible transplant*

Introduction

Familial amyloid polyneuropathy (FAP) is an inherited disorder resulting in systemic deposition of amyloid fibrils containing mutant transthyretin

variants.¹ The outcome of this disease is so poor that FAP has long been considered incurable. The first successful liver transplant in a patient with FAP was performed in 1990, and since then, liver transplant has become widely used for patients with FAP as a life-saving treatment.^{2,3} In Japan, there is little deceased-donor liver transplant, but living-donor liver transplant (LDLT) has been done in patients with FAP. The living donor is selected from among the patient's relatives. Because FAP is an inherited disorder, candidates for living donor can be difficult to find among the relatives. This may lead to an increased use of marginal living donors. We report the outcome of an ABO-incompatible (ABO-I) liver transplant from an anti-HCV-positive donor to a recipient with FAP.

Case Report

A 31-year-old woman presented to us with no relevant history of disease during her childhood. Neurologic manifestations had appeared 5 years earlier, and she was diagnosed with FAP 3 years after that. She had a familial history of FAP, and her mother had died of FAP at 43 years of age, while her sister was a gene carrier (although no symptoms had developed). Her father had hepatitis C virus (HCV) cirrhosis. She was indicated for liver transplant, and the transplant had to be done quickly because of her 5-year history of FAP and its late diagnosis and far advanced nature. However, the possibility of deceased-donor liver transplant in Japan is not good. The only possible living-donor candidate was her 26-year-old husband, but he had an HCV infection and had received interferon therapy 5 years earlier. Furthermore, his blood type was A, and the recipient's blood type was O; thus, the blood types were incompatible. The results of his liver function tests were normal: total bilirubin, 0.8 mg/dL; aspartate aminotransferase,

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Acknowledgements: No specific funding was provided for this study. The authors of this manuscript have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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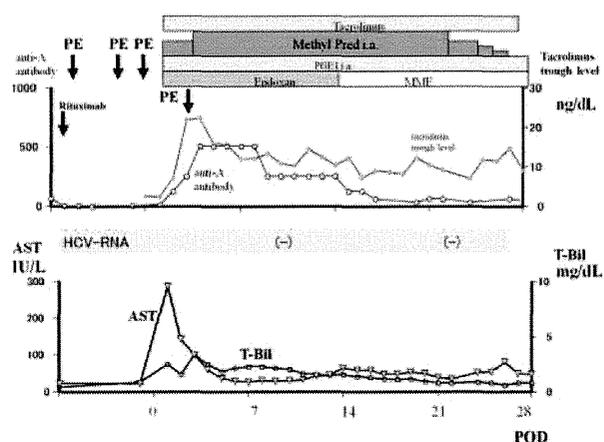
Experimental and Clinical Transplantation (2012):-

20 IU/L; alanine aminotransferase, 26 IU/L; alkaline phosphatase, 250 U/L; gamma-glutamyl transpeptidase, 41 U/L; albumin, 4.2 g/dL; and prothrombin time, 12.5 seconds (90%). His viral profile was as follows: HBs antigen (-); HBs antibody (-); anti-HCV (+); and HCV-RNA (-). A needle liver biopsy was done, and the histologic findings showed only mild steatosis, no necrosis, no hepatitis, and no fibrosis. Despite the fact that the husband was anti-HCV-positive and ABO-I, we decided to proceed with an LDLT because her disease prognosis was poor and there was little chance of any other liver donor available. Furthermore, the donor was happy to donate his liver to his wife even though there is a risk to both the donor and the recipient with LDLT. Approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Kumamoto University Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences after an interview with the donor and the recipient.

We performed an LDLT using a left lobe graft without the caudate lobe. The surgical procedure for the donor and the recipient has been described elsewhere.⁴ The donor's operative duration was 7 hours 32 minutes. The donor's operative blood loss was 470 mL, and no blood transfusion was performed. The total operative duration for the recipient was 10 hours 28 minutes. The actual graft weight was 470 grams, which was 1.04% of the recipient's body weight. The recipient's operative blood loss was 350 mL; thus, no transfusion was necessary.

Because of the ABO-I blood combination, the recipient was treated with an immunosuppression protocol consisting of preoperative rituximab, a plasma exchange, a triple immunosuppressive regimen, intra-arterial infusion therapy, and a splenectomy at surgery (Figure 1). She received 500 mg rituximab intravenously 2 weeks before the LDLT. Her anti-ABO IgM and IgG titers were $\times 512$ and $\times 256$ one week before the operation. Plasma exchange was performed 3 times within 1 week of the LDLT. Her anti-ABO IgM and IgG titers dropped to $\times 2$ and $\times 4$ just before the operation. For hepatic artery infusion, an intra-arterial catheter was placed during the operation, and continuous infusion of prostaglandin E1 (0.01 $\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}/\text{min}$ on days 0 to 14) and methylprednisolone (125 mg/d on days 0 to 7, 50 mg/d on days 8 to 14; then we tapered the dosage and discontinued the drug on day 21). Endoxan (100 mg) was administered from postoperative days

Figure 1. Time Course After Living-Donor Liver Transplant



Abbreviations: IA, intra-arterial infusion; PE, plasma exchange; PGE1, prostaglandin E1; POD, postoperative day; T-Bil, total bilirubin

(POD) 1 to 14; this was followed by mycophenolate mofetil 500 mg twice a day from POD 15 onward.

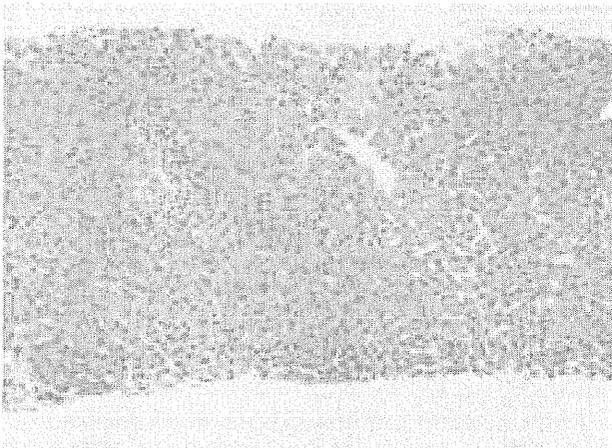
Posttransplant immunosuppression consisted of tacrolimus and steroids. The trough level of tacrolimus was maintained between 10 and 15 ng/mL during the first 2 weeks. Because the anti-ABO IgM and IgG titers rose markedly from the day after transplant, we performed a plasma exchange on POD 3. Although the titers did not decrease immediately, the patient's liver function recovered well. The quantity of steroids in the hepatic artery infusion was increased and the titer gradually decreased. The patient had prolific nausea after transplant probably because of the original disease, but her liver function results recovered to normal on POD 21. Her renal functions were normal before and after the transplant. Hepatitis C virus RNA was not detectable by polymerase chain reaction after the transplant. The hepatic artery catheter was removed on POD 31, and she was discharged from hospital with excellent graft condition 50 days after the operation.

At the time of this writing it has been 6 years after the transplant, and the patient has been well, with excellent graft function, unremarkable liver biochemistry, and has been HCV-RNA negative. Figure 2 shows a liver biopsy 6 years after the transplant, with no evidence of cellular rejection or fibrosis. Progression of FAP is controlled and she has an excellent quality of life.

The postoperative course of the donor also was uneventful. Although serum aspartate aminotransferase increased to 225 IU/L on POD 3, it returned to normal by POD 7. The maximum total

bilirubin level was 2.5 mg/dL on POD3. He left hospital on POD 17. He returned to work 3 months after the operation. At the time of this writing, after 6 years, his liver function test results are normal, and HCV-RNA is negative.

Figure 2. Graft Liver Biopsy 6 Years After Living-Donor Liver Transplant



There was no evidence of fibrosis, hepatitis, or cellular rejection.

Discussion

Liver transplant is the only effective treatment for FAP. More than 65 patients in Japan with FAP have undergone a liver transplant, with living donors consisting of parents, siblings, or husbands; there has been 1 deceased donor.⁶ In Japan, organs from deceased donors remain scarce, so that living-related liver transplant is more common. Because FAP is an autosomal dominant inherited disease, potential living donors are restricted. In the present case, there were potentially serious problems for the donor and recipient, such as a risk of flare-up of the HCV infection in the donor, and HCV transmission under strong immunosuppression due to ABO-I matching in the recipient.

ABO-I living-related liver transplant increasingly has been performed in Japan to overcome the shortage of donor organs. Initially, the outcome was poor because of antibody-mediated rejection; however, it has dramatically improved with the use of local steroid infusion and rituximab prophylaxis.⁷ In the present case, the patient had no antibody-mediated rejection after receiving a living-related liver transplant.

Several single-center studies have shown no significant differences in survival among HCV-positive recipients transplanted with

anti-HCV-positive grafts compared with recipients transplanted with anti-HCV-negative donor organs.⁸⁻¹⁰ Saab and associates reported that the use of HCV-positive grafts in recipients with HCV infection does not appear to affect patient survival, graft survival, or recurrence of HCV infection when compared with using anti-HCV-negative grafts.¹¹ There are several reports of HCV flare-up after chemotherapy and bone marrow transplant in patients with anti-HCV-positive/HCV-RNA-positive grafts.¹²⁻¹⁴ The persistence of HCV in patients with previously cleared HCV remains controversial. However, we could not find and research reporting on the use of anti-HCV-positive/HCV-RNA-negative allografts in non-HCV recipients.

In kidney transplant, Nicot and associates have reported the persistence of HCV in immunocompromised transplant patients who were cleared of the virus while on dialysis, but there was no relapse of HCV infection after long-term follow-up despite intensive immunosuppressive therapy.¹⁵ In the current study, although we were concerned about a transmission of HCV virus and de novo HCV hepatitis in the recipient under strong immunosuppression, the patient had a successful posttransplant outcome, with normal liver biochemistry and undetectable HCV in the allograft and serum at 6 years' follow-up.

Conversely, living donor safety is mandatory. In the current case, we also were concerned about an HCV flare-up in the donor after surgery because of the stress of the invasive surgery and liver regeneration, but we could find no reports of an HCV flare-up after hepatectomy. Six years after surgery, the results of the donor's liver function tests are normal and his HCV-RNA remained negative. Although this is a special case of using a marginal donor, an anti-HCV-positive patient with an HCV-RNA negative donor can be taken into consideration for a donor candidate in a special occasion.

In conclusion, we describe the successful transplant of an FAP patient who underwent ABO-I LDLT using a graft from an anti-HCV-positive donor. When the donor is anti-HCV-positive and HCV-RNA-negative with normal liver histology, transplant may be considered in some situations. Long-term follow-up is required for donor and recipient.

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Sclerosing encapsulating peritonitis after living donor liver transplantation: a case successfully treated with tamoxifen: report of a case

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Received: 21 February 2012 / Accepted: 17 May 2012
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Abstract Sclerosing encapsulating peritonitis (SEP) is a rare cause of bowel obstruction. It is difficult to diagnose and the prognosis is poor. This report describes a case of SEP after living donor liver transplantation that was successfully treated with tamoxifen. A 56-year-old male, that had received a liver transplant for hepatitis C virus-related hepatocellular carcinoma 5 years earlier, was admitted with continuous abdominal pain and nausea. He had increased C-reactive protein levels and white blood cell count, and underwent laparotomy 5 days after hospitalization. The surgical findings showed ascites and SEP of the small bowel. An attempt to peel off the adhesions was stopped because there was a strong risk of intestinal tract damage. Tamoxifen treatment was initiated for SEP after surgery. The patient's symptoms gradually improved and he was able to resume feeding. He had been symptom-free for over 3 years at the last follow-up.

Keywords Sclerosing encapsulating peritonitis · Living donors · Liver transplantation · Liver cirrhosis · Tamoxifen

Introduction

Sclerosing encapsulating peritonitis (SEP) is a rare cause of bowel obstruction and stenosis [1], and is characterized by thick, fibrous membrane formation in the peritoneum. It is difficult to diagnose prior to surgery and the outcome of

SEP is poor with a high mortality [2]. Surgery is the primary treatment option, but this is still associated with significant mortality, and there is a high rate of recurrence [3]. SEP is an uncommon but serious complication of long-term peritoneal dialysis. Liver transplantation is the established treatment for the patients of end-stage liver disease [4]. There are few reports of SEP after liver transplantation. This report presents a case of SEP after living donor liver transplantation that was successfully treated with tamoxifen, a drug reported to have efficacy in SEP [5, 6].

Case report

A 58-year-old male received a liver transplant 5 years previously because of decompensated end-stage liver disease caused by hepatitis C virus-related liver cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma that fulfilled the Milano criteria. He had ascites prior to liver transplantation, but no history of ascites drainage. He underwent living donor liver transplantation with a right lobe graft from his wife. The parietal peritoneum and retroperitoneal liver were observed to be normal during surgery. The patient started immunosuppressive therapy after liver transplantation, with tacrolimus, steroids, and mycophenolate mofetil. He had a splenectomy after a decrease in the platelet count 1 year after liver transplantation, as a result of treatment for recurrence of hepatitis C. He was then started on interferon therapy for hepatitis C but this was stopped 9 months later because of the occurrence of pancytopenia. His general condition continued to be relatively stable. He was admitted with abdominal pain and nausea 5 years after liver transplantation. Laboratory tests found an increase in C-reactive protein (2.5 mg/dL) and white blood cell count (12000/mm³). He had colicky abdominal pain, but no

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rebounding pain was found on physical examination. Contrast abdominal computed tomography (CT) revealed no obstruction of the small intestine, but it did show a dilation of the loops of the small bowel (Fig. 1). He received conservative treatment, but little improvement occurred, with continued abdominal pain and inability to tolerate oral feeding. The patient's abdominal distension increased 5 days later, so he underwent emergency surgery, because an adhering ileus was suspected. Laparotomy revealed dense, thick, adhesive sheaths wrapped around the loops of the small bowel (Fig. 2). The sheath extended from 50 cm from the ligament of Treitz to 50 cm from the terminal ileum. The remaining normal small bowel was only about 100 cm long. The surgeons attempted to release the adhesions of the small bowel, but it was difficult to remove the tight fibrous sheath. These attempts were stopped because of concerns of intestinal perforation, and the abdomen was closed. Medical treatment was initiated surgery, with 20 mg tamoxifen daily in addition to immunosuppressive therapy (tacrolimus and prednisone),

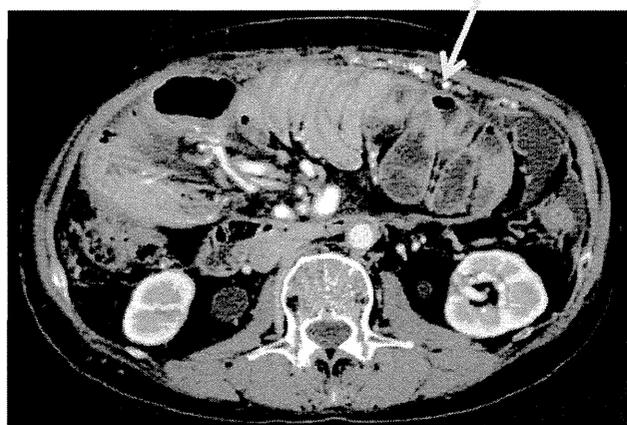


Fig. 1 Computed tomography of the abdomen showing dilated loops of the small bowel with a small amount of ascites



Fig. 2 Surgical findings show dense thick adhesive sheaths wrapped around the loops of the small bowel

which had been administered since transplantation. His condition improved and he was able to start oral feeding 7 days postoperatively. The postoperative recovery continued uneventfully, and he was discharged 3 weeks later. A CT scan showed improvement in the dilatation of the small bowel. He had been symptom-free for over 3 years with the continued administration of tamoxifen when this report was submitted.

Discussion

Sclerosing encapsulating peritonitis is a rare complication recognized as a cause of intestinal obstruction. It was first described in 1907 as peritonitis chronica fibrosa incapsulata by Owtshinnikow [7]. Foo et al. [8] were the first to describe the “abdominal cocoon” in adolescent girls. The causes of SEP are unclear, but the major possible causes are chronic peritoneal dialysis, ventriculoperitoneal shunt and end-stage liver disease complicated by ascites and spontaneous bacterial peritonitis [9–11]. The current patient had no episode of massive ascites or peritonitis after liver transplantation, thus the cause of SEP was not determined. The mortality rate of SEP is high, usually as a result of recurrence and sepsis [3, 12]. In particular, SEP is a dangerous complication arising from long-term dialysis [13]. Dialysis may predispose patients to peritoneal irritation and inflammation, with resulting fibrosis. Although surgery is an essential treatment, with the goal of enterolysis of the membranes and adhesions, the outcome is influenced by the grade of the inflammation and the thickness of the adhesions. The prognosis is particularly poor in cases of long-term SEP, and in cases with strong adhesion. The surgeons could not peel the strong adhesions of the thickened membranes because of the danger of perforating the intestine. There are several reports of effective medical treatment for SEP, which includes treatment with corticosteroid, immunosuppression and tamoxifen [5, 6]. Tamoxifen has been used in the treatment of fibrosing diseases, such as desmoid tumors and idiopathic retroperitoneal fibrosis [14, 15], and in the treatment of breast cancer [16]. Tamoxifen stimulates the production of transforming growth factor β 1 (TGF- β 1), which in turn stimulates the expression of metalloproteinase (MMP)-2 and MMP-9 [17]. Therefore, TGF- β 1 may promote mesothelial healing by facilitating the removal of denatured collagen, since MMP-9 degrades type IV and denatured collagens. However, the detailed mechanism of the action of tamoxifen on SEP has not been proven. The patient had been receiving immunosuppressive treatment with a steroid and tacrolimus since his liver transplant. The addition of tamoxifen to the immunosuppressive regimen was very effective in this patient.

Table 1 The demographic data of SEP after LT

References	Age	Gender	Original disease	Pre-LT history	Post-LT history	Diagnosis after LT	Procedure	Maintenance immunosuppression	Post-medical treatment	Outcome
Abujis et al. [16]	52	M	HCV-LC	SBP	Abdominal bleeding	8 months	Adhesiolysis	Prograf	Aldactone	Alive (6 months)
Mekeel et al. [17]	42	M	HCV-LC	SBP, massive ascites	re-LTx for HCV recurrence	2 years ^a	Adhesiolysis	Prograf, corticosteroid	None	Died
Yamamoto et al. [8]	59	M	ETOH-LC	SBP, ascites	CMV infection	5 months	Adhesiolysis	Prograf	None	Died (9 months)
Lin et al. [18]	64	M	HBV-LC	Hemodialysis, SBP	At LT	At LT	Adhesiolysis	Unexplained	None	Died (17 days)
Maguire et al. [19]	16–57 years	4 M and 1 F	Unexplained	PVS for ascites	Unexplained	2 weeks	Adhesiolysis	Prograf, Cellcept	None	Alive
This case	58	M	HCV-LC, HCC	Ascites	Splenectomy, PV stenosis	58 ± 22 days	Lapalotomy	Unexplained	Prograf, corticosteroid	Unexplained Mortality 20 %

PVS peritoneal venous shunt

SBP spontaneous bacterial peritonitis

^a From second LTx

There have so far been few previous reports of SEP associated with liver transplantation. There are four case reports and one series report, for a total of 12 patients, including the present case (Table 1) [11, 18–21]. Five cases had experienced spontaneous bacterial peritonitis before transplantation, with major ascites and a peritoneal venous shunt was performed for refractory ascites before liver transplantation in most cases. The time of SEP diagnosis was up to 5 years from the time of liver transplantation. All patients underwent laparotomy and all of the cases, excluding the current case, underwent enterolysis. There was no other medical treatment apart from immunosuppressive drugs. The addition of tamoxifen to tacrolimus and prednisone was effective for SEP after laparotomy in the current case. It is possible that the drugs had a synergistic effect against SEP. The outcome of SEP is generally considered to be poor and Mekeel et al. reported three patients that developed SEP after liver transplantation, all of whom died. Five of the 12 reported cases of SEP have died.

In conclusion, this report described a case of SEP associated with living donor liver transplantation, and successful treatment using tamoxifen. SEP is difficult to treat and has a poor prognosis. Treatment with tamoxifen may be beneficial for patients with SEP that cannot be treated surgically.

Conflict of interest Takeichi and other co-authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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