iPSC-CMs showed myosin-positive sarcomeres at 14 days after transplantation (Figure 6A and B). The sarcomeres consisted of myosin and sarcomeric actin. Although the transplanted iPSC-CMs expressed Cx43 at 14 days, the distribution of Cx43 was scarce, and did not clearly show the typical intercalated disks between the transplanted iPSC-CMs (Figure 6C).

In vitro iPSC-CMs showed typical sarcomeric structures in cardiac myocytes with immature, less dense mitochondria (Figure 6D). On the other hand, clear desmosomes were generated between the iPSC-CMs at 3 days after transplantation, while the mitochondria showed more mature structure compared to that prior to the transplantation. At 7 days, mitochondria showed mature structure, whereas the sarcomeric structure or the number of mitochondria was not as dense as those in the native CMs (Figure 6E and F). This indicates that the transplanted iPSC-CMs by the cell-sheet method might have established electrical/mechanical integrity with the native heart. In addition, maturity in the structure and functionality of the iPSC-CMs progressed after the transplantation into the heart.

CT-1353 Cell Transplantation Early Epub; provisional acceptance 12/04/2014

DISCUSSION

We demonstrated here that the amount of VEGF and HGF released by iPSC-CMs was not significantly different from that of the same number of fibroblasts, *in vitro*. Transplantation of the iPSC-CM cell-sheets of mouse origin into the nude rat heart that was subjected to MI better preserved LV function and ARI, compared to that of the fibroblasts. Daily electrical mapping of the heart surface uncovered that transplantation of the iPSC-CM induced multiple ectopic excitations over the cell-sheet implanted area for the initial 2 days, and subsequently ectopic excitations disappeared. In *in vivo* synchrotron radiation small-angle scattering studies, the transplanted iPSC-CMs displayed regularly contracting actin-myosin cross-bridge interactions, similar to that recorded in the native cardiomyocytes of the remote myocardium of the same hearts. Immunohistologically, the transplanted iPSC-CMs, which were equipped with myosin-positive sarcomeres in the cytoplasm, formed Cx43-gap-junction with the native cardiomycytes, while electronmicroscopically, the transplanted iPSC-CMs were equipped with immature sarcomeres and mitochondria, compared to the native cardiomyocytes.

The mechanisms underlying the global functional recovery by iPSC-CM transplantation include 1) that transplanted iPSC-CMs survived and showed synchronized contraction *in vivo* as proven by the diffraction analyses, 2) that transplanted iPSC-CMs were equipped with fully developed sarcomeres *in vivo* and these cells might connect with the recipient myocardium, and 3) that there is functional integration of the transplanted iPSC-CMs into the native myocardium to produce direct mechanical contribution to cardiac function. The direct effects of the transplanted cells were studied chiefly by histological assessment of the excised cardiac tissues, which were examined for the presence and integration of the transplanted cells into the native cardiac tissue, but not the functionality of the transplanted cells. For the first time, *in vivo* scans dissected contractile motion of the

CT-1353 Cell Transplantation Early Epub; provisional acceptance 12/04/2014

transplanted cells by X-ray diffraction techniques using synchrotron radiation. Only X-ray diffraction using synchrotron radiation is able to detect rapid transient shifts in myosin mass most likely attributable to strong cross-bridge formation from relatively few muscle fibres within small regions (0.2 mm x 0.2 mm) (12,20). Myosin mass transfer in the first phase of systole in normal myocardial fibres is directly correlated with global LV force development (13). This feature has enabled us to investigate cardiomyocyte function within pin point regions of the graft, the infarct-borderzone and infarct-remote myocardium in heart failure rats. In this study, contractile motion of the Dsred-labeled iPSC-CMs was clearly dissected from the native cardiomyocytes by the synchrotron study, as the cells were transplanted as a sheet form on the heart surface. In the absence of living native cardiomyocytes beneath the graft it is reasonable to conclude that strong cross-bridge formation of the iPSC-CMs contributed to force development, albeit much reduced compared to remote myocardium. In addition, electrical and functional integration of the transplanted iPSC-CMs in the heart was revealed by electrical mapping and echocardiography, supplemented with histological studies, indicating that contraction of each transplanted iPSC-CMs was transferred into the native cardiac motion, at least in part, contributing to the functional recovery of MI heart.

Other possible mechanisms underlying the functional recovery by the transplantation of iPSC-CM cell-sheets might include "paracrine effects" of the transplanted cells on the native heart (19). In fact, this study revealed that the known paracrine factors, such as VEGF or HGF, were released *in vitro* from the iPSC-CMs as from the fibroblasts, while fibroblasts were proven here not to be differentiated into functional cardiomyocytes after transplantation into the heart. Of note, functional recovery was produced in the iPSC-CMs-transplanted hearts but not in the fibroblast-transplanted hearts, despite similar release of the paracrine factors between those two cell-sources. Although these data would be insufficient to determine the magnitude of the "paracrine effects" by the iPSC-CMs therapy, it is suggested

that functional recovery by the iPSC-CMs transplantation might be chiefly caused by mechanical effects of the transplanted cells, and partly by the paracrine effects. Further basic studies are warranted for magnitude and/or durability of paracrine effects by this treatment.

The transplanted graft was integrated into the cardiac tissue beneath the epicardial layer, in particular, the epicardial layer of the infarct and infarct-border territory in this study. In contrast, it seemed that integration of the transplanted cells crossing the epicardium was less prominent in the remote myocardium from the infarct territory (data not shown). We thus consider that integration of the cell-sheet was determined by the microenvironment of the native cardiac tissue and that ablation of the epicardium prior to the cell-sheet transplantation may enhance the integration of the cell-sheet graft (10). In addition, thorough immunohistolabelling and electron microscopy studies showed abundant expression of connexin43 in the graft but rarely identify the gap junction formation between the graft and the native tissue. We consider that presence of a few gap junctions might be enough to transfer electrical current from the native tissue to the grafted cells.

In this study, the transplanted iPSC-CMs showed an "immature" structure, which was not equipped with dense sarcomeric structure and mitochondrial arrangement, as shown in the immunohistolocial and electron microscopy analysis. This was also evident in the lower reflection intensities obtained from sheet-derived CMs compared to native remote myocardium. Importantly, this study indicates that maturity of iPSC-CMs may progress after transplantation into the heart, though quantitative analysis of the "maturity" of the transplanted cells is needed. The functionality of each transplanted iPSC-CMs, in particular its contractility, is the most important factor in determining the therapeutic effects of this treatment. We also showed that the maturity of *in vitro* differentiated iPSC-CMs is variable according to the origin, the cell-line and the culture protocol, and therefore specific regimens used in culture protocols, such as mechanical stretching in the cell-preparation, mimicking the

CT-1353 Cell Transplantation Early Epub; provisional acceptance 12/04/2014

in vivo environment, might be useful in enhancing the maturation *in vitro* (4,23). One can consider that cell-cell connections between the "immature" cardiomyocytes transplanted into the LV and the native LV cardiomyocytes is likely to produce electrical instability in the LV myocardium resulting in the induction of ventricular arrhythmias. In fact, multiple ectopic excitations appeared in the cell-transplanted area and gradually decreased. Possible causes of the prominent occurrence of premature ventricular contractions in the iPSC-CMs-treated animals would include ectopic excitation directly produced by the transplanted and integrated "immature" iPSC-CMs, or macro/micro re-entries generated by cell transplantation-induced myocardial heterogeneity (1). Although this study failed to dissect the exact cause of the premature contraction, we consider that heterogeneity in the native cardiac tissue would be the main cause, since frequency of the premature contractions was stable for 7 days despite the progressive electrical integration of the graft during this period as in the Figure 1A. While it is unclear that maturation of the transplanted iPSC-CMs is associated with the progressive electrical stability in the LV myocardium in this study, more efficient culture-protocols to enhance maturity of iPSC-CMs, and thereby maximize the therapeutic effects and minimize the arrhythmogenicity of this treatment warrant further investigation.

A limitation of this study may be that we used different species for the iPSC origin and the recipient animal. Interspecies differences may influence functional and electrical integration of the transplanted cells into the recipient native heart. However, the mouse and rat share important proteins related to cell-cell connections and sarcomere structure in the heart (18). The data here therefore are unlikely to be affected by a use of such a xeno-transplantation model. Another limitation could be use of a single iPSC cell-line. As it has been shown that the cell-line is one of the important variable factors that determines the fundamental behavior of iPSCs and their derivatives (22), further studies are warranted to establish an efficient culture protocol to produce the cells that have a consistent quality

CT-1353 Cell Transplantation Early Epub; provisional acceptance 12/04/2014

towards clinical application. In addition, quantitative study of the transplanted cell-survival in the heart would provide further information regarding this treatment.

In conclusion, transplanted iPSC-CMs in a cell-sheet form displayed regularly contracting actin-myosin cross-bridge interactions in the heart surface with synchronous contraction with the native cardiac tissue, contributing to global functional recovery from ischemic heart injury in the rat. High-flux synchrotron X-ray diffraction offers a promising potential as an *in vivo* cellular and molecular level modality for evaluating transplanted iPSC-CM function. Finally, it is important to develop culture protocols to enhance functionality of the iPSC-CMs for successful clinical application of this treatment.

CT-1353 Cell Transplantation Early Epub; provisional acceptance 12/04/2014

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

CT-1353 Cell Transplantation Early Epub; provisional acceptance 12/04/2014

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