

DOCTORAL THESIS

Therapeutic potential of a Wnt modulator ICG-001 on nasopharyngeal carcinoma

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ABSTRACT

According to the cancer stem cells (CSCs) hypothesis, CSCs are responsible for the treatment failures. CSCs are a subset of cells possessing stemness properties within the heterogeneous tumor mass. Therapeutic intervention on Wnt signaling is of our great interest because an aberrant Wnt signaling is an important driver to maintain the potency of CSCs. In nasopharyngeal carcinoma (NPC), deregulated expression of the Wnt signaling components is frequently observed. ICG-001 is a selective Wnt modulator (CBP antagonist) that specifically interrupts the interaction between β -catenin and CBP, thereby encourages the interaction between β -catenin and p300 and the subsequent differentiation and reduction of the CSCs subset. For this reason, the present study aimed to evaluate the therapeutic potential of ICG-001 in NPC.

Results showed that ICG-001 inhibited both the migration of the NPC cells and the formation of tumor spheres. In the first part of the mechanistic studies (Chapter 3), ICG-001 was found to restore the expression of miR-150 in NPC cells. MiR-150 was further found to directly reduce CD44 expression and inhibit NPC cell migration. In the second part of the mechanistic studies (Chapter 4), ICG-001 was found to reduce the expression of Evi1 in NPC cells. The effect was accompanied with the inhibition of both the NPC cells migration and the tumor spheres formation. Two molecular axes, namely miR-96/Evi1/miR-449a and survivin/Evi1/miR-449a, were found to be involved in the inhibition of the tumor cell migration and spheroids formation. The therapeutic potential of using this CBP antagonist (ICG-001) in NPC, namely the *in vitro* and *in vivo* efficacy of ICG-001 combined with cisplatin, was examined (Chapter 5). Concurrent treatment of ICG-001 and cisplatin exhibited a synergistic inhibition on the *in vitro* growth and the tumor sphere forming capacity of NPC cells as well as the growth of NPC xenografts. Taken together, results presented in this thesis suggested that ICG-001 (PRI-724 is the analog of ICG-001 currently used in clinical trials) has a therapeutic potential in NPC.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Declaration | i |
| Abstract | ii |
| Acknowledgements | iii |
| Table of Contents | v |
| List of Tables | xi |
| List of Figures | xii |
| List of Abbreviations | xvi |
| | |
| Chapter 1 Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Nasopharyngeal carcinoma (NPC) | 2 |
| 1.1.1 Epidemiology | 2 |
| 1.1.2 Histological classification | 4 |
| 1.1.3 Diagnosis and staging | 4 |
| 1.1.4 Etiology | 8 |
| 1.1.5 Treatments | 9 |
| 1.1.6 Wnt signaling in NPC tumorigenesis | 10 |
| 1.2 Cancer stem cells (CSCs) | 12 |
| 1.2.1 Hypothesis | 12 |
| 1.2.2 Definition and properties | 14 |
| 1.2.3 CSCs in NPC | 15 |
| 1.2.4 Wnt/ β -catenin and therapeutic implication | 16 |
| 1.3 MicroRNAs (miRNAs) | 18 |
| 1.3.1 Canonical biogenesis pathway | 18 |

| | | |
|--|---|-----------|
| 1.3.2 | Cellular functions | 19 |
| 1.4 | CBP antagonists: ICG-001 and PRI-724 | 20 |
| 1.4.1 | Molecular mechanisms of action | 20 |
| 1.4.2 | Progress of clinical trials using CBP antagonists in cancer therapy | 20 |
| 1.5 | Scopes of the study | 22 |
| Chapter 2 Materials and Methods | | 23 |
| 2.1 | Materials | 24 |
| 2.2 | Cell culture | 24 |
| 2.3 | Plasmid constructs | 25 |
| 2.4 | Cell growth assay | 27 |
| 2.5 | Transient transfection | 27 |
| 2.6 | Transwell migration assay | 28 |
| 2.7 | Tumor spheroid formation assay | 28 |
| 2.8 | Western blotting | 29 |
| 2.9 | miRNA target prediction | 30 |
| 2.10 | Luciferase reporter assay | 31 |
| 2.10.1 | TCF/LEF reporter assay | 31 |
| 2.10.2 | miRNA target analysis | 31 |
| 2.11 | Quantitative real-time PCR (qRT-PCR) | 32 |
| 2.11.1 | Total RNA extraction | 32 |
| 2.11.2 | mRNA expression analysis | 32 |
| 2.11.3 | miRNA expression analysis | 33 |
| 2.12 | Co-Immunoprecipitation | 33 |

| | | |
|--|--|----|
| 2.13 | Nude mice tumorigenicity assay | 34 |
| | 2.13.1 Housing | 34 |
| | 2.13.2 Surgery | 34 |
| | 2.13.3 NPC xeno-2117 xenograft study | 34 |
| | 2.13.4 NPC C17 xenograft study | 35 |
| 2.14 | Drug combination studies | 36 |
| 2.15 | Statistical analysis | 37 |
| Chapter 3 CD44 is involved in the anti-migratory effect of ICG-001 on NPC | | 38 |
| 3.1 | Introduction | 39 |
| 3.2 | Results | 41 |
| | 3.2.1 Effect of ICG-001 on the growth of NPC cells | 41 |
| | 3.2.2 ICG-001 inhibits canonical Wnt signaling in NPC cells | 41 |
| | 3.2.3 ICG-001 inhibits the migration of NPC cells | 42 |
| | 3.2.4 Knockdown of β -catenin or CBP inhibits the migration of C666-1 cells | 42 |
| | 3.2.5 ICG-001 down-regulates the expression of CD44 | 42 |
| | 3.2.6 Knockdown of CD44 inhibits the migration of C666-1 cells but not the growth of tumor spheres | 43 |
| | 3.2.7 Association between ezrin and CD44 in C666-1 cells | 43 |
| | 3.2.8 ICG-001 enhances the expression of miR-150 | 44 |
| | 3.2.9 CD44 is a novel target of miR-150 | 44 |
| | 3.2.10 Overexpression of miR-150 resulted in the reduction of the migration of C666-1 cells but not the growth | 45 |

| | | |
|--|---|--------|
| | of tumor spheres | |
| 3.2.11 | ICG-001 inhibits Dnmt1 expression | 45 |
| 3.2.12 | Silencing Dnmt1 restores the expression of miR-150 | 46 |
| 3.3 | Discussion | 47 |
| Chapter 4 Evi1 is involved in the growth suppression and migration of NPC cells | | 77 |
| 4.1 | Introduction | 78 |
| 4.2 | Results | 80 |
| 4.2.1 | ICG-001 inhibits tumor spheroid formation of C666-1 cells | 80 |
| 4.2.2 | ICG-001 inhibits the growth of established tumor spheres of C666-1 cells | 80 |
| 4.2.3 | Effect of ICG-001 pre-treatment on the growth of C666-1 tumor spheres | 81 |
| 4.2.4 | ICG-001 down-regulates the expression of Evi1 | 81 |
| 4.2.5 | Effect of Evi1 on the formation of tumor spheres and the migration of C666-1 cells | 81 |
| 4.2.6 | ICG-001 enhances the expression of miR-96 which targets the Evi1 transcript | 82 |
| 4.2.7 | Effect of miR-96 on the formation of tumor spheres and the migration of C666-1 cells | 83 |
| 4.2.8 | ICG-001 enhances the expression of miR-449a | 83 |
| 4.2.9 | Overexpression of miR-449a inhibits the formation of tumor sphere and the migration of C666-1 cells | 84 |

| | | |
|--|--|-----|
| 4.2.10 | Effect of silencing or overexpression of Evi1 on the expression of miR-96 and miR-449a | 84 |
| 4.2.11 | The coordination between miR-96 and miR-449a | 84 |
| 4.2.12 | Knockdown of β -catenin or CBP inhibits tumor spheroid formation | 85 |
| 4.2.13 | Knockdown of β -catenin or CBP enhances the expression of miR-96 and miR-449a | 85 |
| 4.2.14 | Knockdown of p300 reduces the expression of miR96 and miR449a | 85 |
| 4.2.15 | ICG-001 reduces the protein expression of survivin | 86 |
| 4.2.16 | Silencing of survivin represses the expression of Evi1 | 86 |
| 4.2.17 | Effect of survivin knockdown on the expression of miR-96 and miR-449a | 87 |
| 4.3 | Discussion | 88 |
| Chapter 5 ICG-001 enhances the treatment efficacy of cisplatin on NPC | | 128 |
| 5.1 | Introduction | 129 |
| 5.2 | Results | 130 |
| 5.2.1 | Effect of ICG-001/cisplatin concurrent therapy on the growth of NPC cells | 130 |
| 5.2.2 | Effect of ICG-001/cisplatin concurrent therapy on tumor spheroid formation | 131 |
| 5.2.3 | Effect of ICG-001/cisplatin concurrent therapy in nude mice tumorigenicity assay | 131 |

| | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|-----|
| 5.3 | Discussion | 133 |
| Chapter 6 Conclusions and future perspectives | | 152 |
| 6 | Conclusions and future perspectives | 153 |
| References | | 157 |
| Curriculum Vitae | | 172 |