

DOCTORAL THESIS

Mass spectrometry based metabolomics for biomarkers of Parkinson's disease

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ABSTRACT

Increasing evidence has shown that abnormal metabolic phenotypes in body fluids reflect the pathogenesis and pathophysiology of Parkinson's disease (PD). However, the relationship between metabolic phenotypes and PD is not fully understood. Mass spectrometry (MS) based metabolomics is a powerful technique, which was frequently used for the sensitive and reproducible detection of hundreds to thousands of metabolites in biofluid samples.

Here we developed and performed MS-based metabolomics studies involving hundreds of human urine samples with data acquired from multiple analytical batches for surveying potential biomarkers of PD. A new software *statTarget* was developed and introduced. Protocols for liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry (LC-MS) and gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) were developed, including sample preparation, data acquisition, quality controls, quality assurance and data analysis. Urinary metabolites from a total of 401 clinical urine samples collected from 106 idiopathic PD patients and 104 normal control subjects were profiled by using LC-MS. Quality control (QC) strategy has been performed in MS-based metabolomics for high reproducibility and accuracy of MS data. GC-MS with methyl chloroformate (MCF) derivatization was used for profiling highly polar metabolites in patients with early-, middle- and advanced-stage PD. Our study revealed the significant correlation between clinical phenotypes and urinary metabolite profiles. Comprehensive metabolomics was successfully developed with the goal of identifying urinary metabolite markers that can be used for evaluating the development of PD. A group of 18 metabolites have shown not

only a high discriminating ability for the early-stage PD patients but also accurately distinguished the middle- and advanced- stages patients from control subjects. For the evaluation of PD, 18 metabolites showed good potential as metabolite markers with related metabolic pathway variations observed in branched chain amino acid metabolism, glycine derivation, steroid hormone biosynthesis, tryptophan metabolism, and phenylalanine metabolism.

We have further performed targeted analysis of potential biomarkers by using ultra-performance liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry (UPLC-MS/MS) and GC-MS. The UPLC-MS/MS method was developed and optimized for detecting the concentration variation of metabolites in tryptophan metabolism for alpha-synuclein over-expressed flies (Parkinson's disease model). The altered tryptophan metabolism was proved as one of the common metabolite signatures between PD patients and alpha-synuclein over-expressed fly model of PD, and thus may be used for developing potential markers of the disease and evaluating the efficacy of novel therapeutic agents. An asymmetric labeling strategy and positive chemical ionization gas chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry (PCI-GC-MS-MS) approach was developed for the determination of non-amino organic acids and amino acids, as well as short chain fatty acids. Carboxylic and amino groups could be selectively labelled by propyl and ethyl groups, respectively. The specific neutral losses of C_3H_8O (60 Da), $C_3H_5O_2$ (74 Da) and $C_4H_8O_2$ (88 Da) were useful in the selective identification for qualitative analysis of organic acids and amino acid derivatives. The developed PCI-GC-MS/MS method showed good reproducibility and linear range.

In summary, metabolomics study has its inherent advantage in the characterization of biomarkers for the development of PD and may bring new scientific knowledge as well as impact on the progression of PD and other related neurodegenerative diseases.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF TABLES	xxi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS	xxii
CHAPTER 1	1
General Introduction	1
1.1 Metabolomics: from small molecules to big story	1
1.2 Integrated metabolomic technology platform	4
1.3 Application of mass spectrometry in large-scale metabolomics studies	9
1.4 Application of metabolomics to Parkinson's disease	10
1.5 Mass spectrometry based metabolomics in Parkinson's disease	13
1.6 Objectives	14
CHAPTER 2	16
Development and Application of MS-based Non-targeted Metabolomics Method	16
2.1 Introduction	16
2.2 Materials and methods	23
2.2.1 Chemicals and reagents	23

2.2.2 Sample preparation and derivatization.....	23
2.2.3 Separation and analysis of the MCF derivatives.....	24
2.2.4 MS analysis and instrumental conditions	24
2.3 Results and discussion	25
2.3.1 Development of GC-MS method.....	25
2.3.2 Development of LC-MS method	28
2.3.3 Metabolite identification.....	30
2.3.4 Quality control and quality assurance.....	34
2.3.5 Data analysis and software development.....	38
2.4 Chapter summary	43
CHAPTER 3.....	44
Urinary Metabolomic Profiling for Distinct Metabolic Phenotypes of Parkinson's Disease	44
3.1 Introduction.....	44
3.2 Materials and methods	46
3.2.1 Study subjects and samples collection.....	46
3.2.2 Chemicals and reagents.....	48
3.2.3 Urine sample preparation.....	48
3.2.4 MS analysis and metabolic profiling spectral acquisition	49
3.3 Results.....	49
3.3.1 Data quality evaluation	49
3.3.2 Association between clinical phenotypes and metabolic phenotypes.....	53
3.3.3 Distinct metabolic phenotypes in Parkinson's disease patients.....	56
3.3.4 Abnormal metabolites associated with Parkinson's disease.....	60
3.3.5 Perturbed metabolic pathways in Parkinson's disease.....	67

3.3.6 Classification of Parkinson's disease patients and normal controls	70
3.4 Discussion.....	73
3.4.1 Urinary metabolic profile associated with Parkinson's disease.....	74
3.4.2 Steroidogenesis and Parkinson's disease	75
3.4.3 Fatty acid beta-oxidation and Parkinson's disease	76
3.4.4 Amino acid metabolism and Parkinson's disease.....	77
3.4.5 Tryptophan metabolism and Parkinson's disease.....	79
3.4.6 Gut microbiota derived metabolites and Parkinson's disease.....	82
3.5 Chapter summary	83
CHAPTER 4.....	84
Comprehensive Metabolomics for Identification of Biomarkers for Parkinson's Disease	84
4.1 Introduction.....	84
4.2 Materials and methods	85
4.2.1 Chemicals and reagents.....	85
4.2.2 Study subjects and samples collection.....	85
4.2.3 Sample preparation and derivatization.....	88
4.2.4 MS analysis and instrumental conditions	89
4.3 Results.....	90
4.3.1 Data quality assessment	90
4.3.2 Multivariate statistical analysis of metabolic profiles	92
4.3.3 Differentially expressed metabolites for Parkinson's disease	95
4.3.4 Z-score of metabolic markers for PD.....	119
4.3.5 Clustering and heatmap analysis of metabolic markers for PD	122
4.3.6 ROC analysis of metabolic markers for PD.....	122

4.4 Discussion.....	126
4.4.1 Urinary metabolic markers in Parkinson’s disease.....	126
4.4.2 Branched-chain amino acids.....	126
4.4.3 Glycine and glycine derivatives.....	127
4.4.4 Cortisol and related catabolites.....	128
4.4.5 Tryptophan and related catabolites.....	128
4.5 Chapter summary.....	131
CHAPTER 5.....	132
Targeted Analysis of Tryptophan Metabolites in Alpha-synuclein Overexpressed Flies.....	132
5.1 Introduction.....	132
5.2 Materials and methods.....	133
5.2.1 Chemicals and reagents.....	133
5.2.2 Instrumentation and equipment.....	133
5.2.3 UPLC conditions.....	134
5.2.4 MS tuning and optimization.....	137
5.2.5 Fly strains and culture conditions.....	137
5.2.6 Protein extraction and western blotting analysis.....	137
5.2.7 Metabolites extraction in the flies.....	138
5.2.8 Statistics analysis.....	138
5.3 Result.....	139
5.3.1 Evaluation of HILIC, C18 and T3 columns.....	139
5.3.2 Effects of pH and ionic strength.....	140
5.3.3 Optimized multiple reaction monitoring conditions in MS.....	140
5.3.4 Over expressed alpha-synuclein in the fly model.....	147

5.3.5 Alteration of kynurenine pathway in the fly model	148
5.4 Discussion	152
5.4.1 Alpha-synuclein and Parkinson's disease	152
5.4.2 Interaction between alpha-synuclein and metabolites in Drosophila models	152
5.4.3 Alteration of tryptophan metabolism in Drosophila models.....	154
5.4.4 Proposed toxic mechanism of alpha-synuclein in Drosophila models	154
5.5 Chapter summary	157
CHAPTER 6.....	158
Identification of Non-amino Organic Acid and Amino Acid Profiles using PCI-GC-MS/MS Approach.....	158
6.1 Introduction.....	158
6.2 Materials and methods	159
6.2.1 Chemicals and reagents.....	159
6.2.2 Clinical samples preparation and derivatization	160
6.2.3 MS analysis and instrumental conditions	161
6.2.4 Separation and analysis of the ECF derivatives.....	161
6.2.5 Data processing.....	162
6.2.6 Statistics analysis	162
6.3 Results and discussion	162
6.3.1 Optimization of derivatization reagents.....	162
6.3.2 Tracing derivatives with stable isotope labeling.....	166
6.3.3 Identification of ECF derivatives.....	170
6.3.4 Mass spectral characterization of fatty acids derivatives.....	170
6.3.5 Mass spectral characterization of amino acids derivatives	171

6.3.6 Sensitivity and linearity	176
6.3.7 Precision.....	181
6.4 Chapter summary	183
CHAPTER 7.....	184
Conclusions and Future Prospect.....	184
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	187
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	218