Lack of Carcinogenicity of 2-Amino-3,8-dimethylimidazo[4,5-f]quinoxaline (MeIQx) in Cynomolgus Monkeys

Kumiko Ogawa,1,2,6 Hiroyuki Tsuda,3 Tomoyuki Shirai,1 Tadashi Ogiso,1 Keiji Wakabayashi,3 Dan W. Dalgard,4 Unnur P. Thorgerisson,3 Snorri S. Thorgerisson,3 Richard H. Adamson5,7 and Takashi Sugimura3

1Nagoya City University Medical School, 1 Kawasumi, Mizuho-cho, Mizuho-ku, Nagoya 467-8601, 2Nagoyashi Kohseiin Geriatric Hospital, 2-1501 Sekobou, Meito-ku, Nagoya 465-0055, 3National Cancer Center Research Institute, 5-1-1 Tsukiji, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-0045, 4Covance Laboratories America, 9200 Leesburg Pike, Vienna, Virginia 22182 and 5National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, Maryland 20892, USA

The carcinogenic potential of 2-amino-3,8-dimethylimidazo[4,5-f]quinoxaline (MeIQx) was evaluated in cynomolgus monkeys. The animals received MeIQx, beginning at the age of one year, at doses of 10 or 20 mg/kg body weight by gavage five times a week for 84 months and were autopsied 8 months thereafter. Although sporadic development of aberrant crypt foci in the colon and glutathione S-transferase π-positive foci in the liver as well as hyperplastic changes of the lymphatic tissue in the lung and gastro-intestinal tract were observed in several monkeys, this was not treatment-related. No neoplastic or preneoplastic lesions were found in other organs. Serum chemistry data and organ weights were also within the normal ranges. From these data, it is concluded that MeIQx is not carcinogenic in the cynomolgus monkey under the conditions examined. This lack of carcinogenicity is probably related to the poor activation of MeIQx due to the lack of constitutive expression of CYP1A2 as well as an inability of other cytochrome P450s to catalyze N-hydroxylation of MeIQx in the cynomolgus monkey.

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room with a 12 h light/12 h dark cycle. Purina High Protein Monkey Chow #5045 was offered twice daily, and the animals also received a vitamin sandwich and a portion of apple daily.

Observations All monkeys were observed daily and body weights were measured weekly. Evaluation by liver palpation and clinical chemistry and hematology tests were also performed every three months. Laparoscopic examination of the liver was carried out every 6–12 months. At the termination, the monkeys were killed with an overdose of sodium pentobarbital. All the organs were carefully examined for macroscopic lesions, weighed and fixed in 4% buffered formalin. The entire colons were spread, pinned on cork boards and stained with 0.2% methylene blue for 30 to 60 min after formalin fixation, in order to count aberrant crypt foci under a stereoscopic microscope. For histopathological examination, hematoxylin-eosin-stained sections were made from specimens of the heart, lung, trachea, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, colon, liver, gallbladder, pancreas, kidney, urinary bladder, spleen, thymus, thyroid, adrenal glands, mammary glands, brain, nasal cavity, vertebra and reproductive organs. Liver sections were additionally immunostained for glutathione S-transferase (GST) placental form with a polyclonal antibody specific for the human homologue, GST-π (generous gift from the late Dr. K. Sato, Second Department of Biochemistry, Hirosaki University School of Medicine) and Vectastain ABC kits (Vector Laboratories, Burlingame, CA).

RESULTS During the entire experiment, no unusual clinical symptoms were displayed by any of the animals. The final average body and organ weights are summarized in Table I. All individual body weights and organ weights (data not shown) were within the normal ranges. The average clinical chemistry values at termination were also normal (Table II). Macroscopically, one female monkey in the group fed MeIQx at a dose of 20 mg/kg had an approximately 7 mm diameter yellowish nodule-like lesion and another had multiple small cysts (1–2 mm diameter) in the

| Table I. Final Body and Organ Weights (g) |
|------------------------------------------|
| MeIQx 20 mg/kg b.w. | MeIQx 10 mg/kg b.w. | Control |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------|
| No. of animals      | Male    | Female  | Male    | Female  | Male    | Female  |
| Body                | 6650±518 | 4800±949 | 6233±833 | 3983±578 | 5600±3400 |
| Brain               | 73.3±3.1  | 64.9±5.4 | 74.9±5.2 | 63.9±5.3 | 72.8±62.1 |
| Spleen              | 4.8±0.8   | 5.1±2.0  | 3.9±0.8  | 3.8±1.4  | 4.9±3.7  |
| Lung                | 26.0±3.5  | 18.8±1.7 | 29.5±6.1 | 17.5±2.0 | 23.1±12.2 |
| Heart               | 23.6±3.6  | 15.9±5.1 | 22.2±1.2 | 14.0±2.5 | 15±10.9  |
| Liver               | 93.0±5.5  | 87.3±13.8| 86.7±13.1| 71.8±9.9 | 79±57    |
| Adrenal glands      | 0.54±0.14 | 0.55±0.10| 0.69±0.25| 0.48±0.07| 0.87±0.53|
| Kidney              | 19.1±1.8 | 15.1±3.1 | 17.5±3.0 | 14.7±1.7 | 15.9±12.8|
| Thymus              | 1.60±1.10 | 3.08±1.45| 1.09±0.72| 1.97±0.91| 0.60±2.06|

Values are averages±SD.

| Table II. Clinical Chemistry Values at the End Point |
|---------------------------------------------|
| MeIQx 20 mg/kg b.w. | MeIQx 10 mg/kg b.w. | Control |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------|
| No. of animals      | Male    | Female  | Male    | Female  | Male    | Female  |
| GOT                 | 46.2±12.3 | 45.3±4.9 | 57.3±6.4 | 42.0±3.2 | 70±39   |
| GPT                 | 27.8±9.9   | 62.8±39.6| 47.7±11.2 | 60.5±22.7| 16±23   |
| LDH                 | 511.3±146.3| 569.8±173.1| 689.7±163.6| 540.8±127.2| 1277±812|
| ALP                 | 168.5±31.4 | 159.0±31.1| 208.7±91.9 | 205.3±71.8| 134±206 |
| T. BIL              | 0.28±0.12 | 0.23±0.05| 0.27±0.06 | 0.20±0.00 | 0.3±0.1  |

GOT, glutamate oxaloacetate transaminase; GPT, glutamate pyruvate transaminase; LDH, lactate dehydrogenase; ALP, alkaline phosphatase; T. BIL, total bilirubin. Values are averages±SD.
liver. Microscopically, these were a fat storage focus that contained some hepatocytes with a few PAS-positive glycogen granules in their narrow cytoplasm, without compression of the surrounding tissue (Fig. 1), and bile duct cysts, respectively. No other lesions were noted on macroscopic examination.

In immunohistochemical analysis, spotty distribution of GST-\(\pi\) positive hepatocytes (Fig. 2A) was observed in two controls, in 3 (one male and two females) of 9 monkeys that received 10 mg/kg and in 2 (two females) of 10 monkeys that received 20 mg/kg. Clear diffuse induction of cytosolic GST-\(\pi\) in the hepatocytes around the central veins (Fig. 2B) was observed in 2 (one male and one female) and 8 (six males and two females) monkeys at doses of 10 and 20 mg/kg MeIQx, respectively. The intensity of expression was less in untreated animals. Typical GST placental form (GST-\(\pi\), human; GST-p, rats)-positive liver cell foci, which are frequently observed in the liver of rats treated with various carcinogens,\(^{13-15}\) were not seen, but partial positive staining was seen in the fat storage focus (Fig. 2C).

Sporadic aberrant crypt foci in the colon were seen in each group of monkeys (Table III). In the male control, 2 foci composed of 16 crypts and 8 crypts were encountered in the transverse colon. In animals given 10 mg/kg MeIQx, a focus of 46 crypts in the transverse colon of a male and foci of 2 and 4 crypts (Fig. 3) in the descending colons of two females were observed. In the animals given 20 mg/kg of MeIQx, lesions composed of 6 crypts in the transverse colon in a male and 12 crypts in the transverse colon in a female were found.

Neither neoplastic nor preneoplastic lesions were found in any other organs. Hyperplastic changes of lymphatic tissue in the stomach (Fig. 4A), small and large intestines and lung (Fig. 4B) were noted in several monkeys but without any apparent relation to the treatment (Table IV). Increase in mesenchymal cells in the kidney was observed.
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in the two out of six males and one out of four females that received 20 mg/kg of MeIQx (Table IV).

**DISCUSSION**

In previous studies of long-term administration of IQ to cynomolgus monkeys, obvious carcinogenicity was seen in the liver.\(^{10-12}\) However, in the present investigation of MeIQx in cynomolgus monkeys, no carcinogenicity was apparent in any organ, including the liver. If MeIQx is not carcinogenic in the cynomolgus monkey, the following factors may be pertinent. First, species differences in the capacity for metabolic activation of certain HCAs have been seen among the rat, cynomolgus monkey and man.\(^{16-18}\) MeIQx, like other HCAs, requires metabolism via \(N\)-oxidation for conversion into reactive species with genotoxic activity. This is reported to be catalyzed primarily by hepatic CYP1A2.\(^{19}\) In the cynomolgus monkey, expression of CYP3A4 and/or CYP2C9/10 which preferentially activate IQ, but not MeIQx, is dominant in the hepatic microsomes, whereas the levels of CYP1A1 and 1A2 (responsible for activation of MeIQx) are very low or not detectable.\(^{20-22}\) Snyderwine et al.\(^{22}\) reported that in cynomolgus monkeys, only 5.7% of dosed IQ was excreted into the urine unmetabolized and \(N\)-demethylated-IQ, which is weakly mutagenic, accounted for nearly 40% of

| Treatment | Dose (mg/kg) | Sex  | No. of monkeys | No. of ACF-bearing monkeys | Size of ACF (No. of crypts) |
|-----------|--------------|------|----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| MeIQx     | 20           | Male | 6              | 1                         | 6                           |
|           |              | Female | 4            | 1                          | 12                          |
| MeIQx     | 10           | Male | 3              | 1                         | 46                          |
|           |              | Female | 6            | 2                          | 2, 4                        |
| Control   |              | Male | 1              | 1                         | 16                          |
|           |              | Female | 1            | 0                          | —                           |

Fig. 3. Aberrant crypt focus in the colon of a 10 mg/kg MeIQx-treated monkey. The focus is composed of 4 enlarged crypts with elongated slit-like orifices (methylene blue staining).

Fig. 4. Hyperplastic changes of the lymphatic tissue. A: Hyperplastic lymph nodes seen in stomach submucosa in a 20 mg/kg MeIQx-treated female (hematoxylin-eosin staining). B: Hyperplastic lymphatic tissue observed in the lung of a 20 mg/kg MeIQx-treated female (hematoxylin-eosin staining).
all urinary metabolites. On the other hand, 24% of the MeIQx was excreted unchanged in the urine and all the metabolites were detoxified forms, including the $N^\gamma$-glucuronide conjugate of MeIQx. Indeed, it was reported that intense IQ-DNA adduct formation, but no detectable level of MeIQx-DNA adducts, was observed in a number of organs of cynomolgus monkeys treated with these HCAs, using the $^{32}$P-postlabeling method.\(^{23}\) A second consideration is that the doses and period of the experiment might not have been long enough to induce tumors. Thirdly, inactivation or detoxification of the chemical might have been important. Diffuse induction of GST-$\pi$ was seen in the livers of most animals that received 20 mg/kg of MeIQx. Sporadic GST-$\pi$-positive hepatocytes were detected even in the controls, but they were much fewer than in MeIQx-treated monkeys. Thus, the induction of GST-$\pi$ in the treated animals might have resulted in elevated detoxification of MeIQx. Proliferating oval cells, prominent in IQ-treated monkeys,\(^{24}\) were not observed in this experiment, so the liver toxicity of MeIQx was presumably also weaker than that of IQ.

In humans, 1.8–4.9% of oral MeIQx is excreted unmetabolized in urine after ingestion of a cooked meat meal\(^{25}\) and MeIQx-DNA adducts, most of them being dG-C8-MeIQx, have been detected in the colon and kidney.\(^{26,27}\) The human hepatic microsomal fraction activates MeIQx as well as IQ and PhIP, through expression of CYP1A2\(^{20}\) and foodstuffs such as pan-fried meat increase CYP1A2 activity, as measured by the ratio of urinary caffeine metabolites, in healthy volunteers.\(^{28}\) Administration of furafylline, an inhibitor of CYP1A2, increased the levels of unchanged MeIQx and PhIP in human urine.\(^{29}\) Furthermore, healthy individuals with high CYP1A2 activity excrete lower levels of total unconjugated MeIQx in the urine when adjusted for the amount of meat eaten.\(^{30}\) CYP1A2 activity can be affected by life style factors such as diet or smoking.\(^{31}\) Thus, a low susceptibility of cynomolgus monkeys to MeIQx might support the concept that inter-individual variation in CYP1A2 activity is relevant to cancers associated with exposure to HCAs.

In conclusion, a 7-year oral administration of MeIQx did not induce any neoplastic lesions in the cynomolgus monkey, which lacks expression of CYP1A2.

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