Transduced Tat-DJ-1 protein inhibits cytokines-induced pancreatic RINm5F cell death

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INTRODUCTION

Loss of pancreatic β-cells by oxidative stress or cytokines is associated with diabetes mellitus (DM). DJ-1 is known to be a multifunctional protein, which plays an important role in cell survival. We prepared cell permeable wild type (WT) and mutant type (M26I) Tat-DJ-1 proteins to investigate the effects of DJ-1 against combined cytokines (IL-1β, IFN-γ and TNF-α)-induced RINm5F cell death. Both Tat-DJ-1 proteins were transduced into RINm5F cells. WT Tat-DJ-1 proteins significantly protected against cell death from cytokines by reducing intracellular toxicities. Also, WT Tat-DJ-1 proteins markedly regulated cytokines-induced pro- and anti-apoptosis proteins. However, M26I Tat-DJ-1 protein showed relatively low protective effects, as compared to WT Tat-DJ-1 protein. Our experiments demonstrated that WT Tat-DJ-1 protein protects against cytokine-induced RINm5F cell death by suppressing intracellular toxicities and regulating apoptosis-related protein expression. Thus, WT Tat-DJ-1 protein could potentially serve as a therapeutic agent for DM and cytokine related diseases. [BMB Reports 2016; 49(5): 297-302]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Purified Tat-DJ-1 protein transduced into RINm5F cells

DJ-1 expression is known to play a crucial role in protecting against cell death by a variety of stimuli (23). However, the effect of wild type DJ-1 or M26I mutant DJ-1 proteins on pancreatic β-cell death is poorly understood. To examine the effect of DJ-1 proteins against cytokine-induced cell death, cell
Tat-DJ-1 protects cytokine damage in RINm5F cells
Hyo Sang Jo, et al.

Permeable WT Tat-DJ-1 and M26I Tat-DJ-1 proteins were constructed and purified. Also, we constructed and purified control DJ-1 protein without a Tat peptide. Tat peptides are one of a variety of protein transduction domains (PTDs) that are widely used to transduce therapeutic molecules into cells (18). As shown in Figs. 1A-1C, we confirmed purified Tat-DJ-1 proteins by SDS-PAGE and Western blot analysis using an anti-histidine antibody. Next, we examined purified DJ-1 protein transduction into RINm5F cells. Immunofluorescence data demonstrated that purified Tat-DJ-1 proteins were markedly detected in the cytoplasm and nucleus of RINm5F cells (Fig. 1D). The results of these experiments demonstrated the successful transduction of purified Tat-DJ-1 protein into RINm5F cells.

The transduction efficiency of Tat-DJ-1 proteins into pancreatic RINm5F cells was determined by treating RINm5F cells with various Tat-DJ-1 proteins (0.5-3 μM) for 1 h or with Tat-DJ-1 proteins (3 μM) for various times (5-60 min). Then, transduction efficiency analysis was conducted by Western blotting. As shown in Fig. 2, Tat-DJ-1 proteins were transduced into RINm5F cells time- or dose-dependently. However, WT Tat-DJ-1 proteins were more rapidly transduced into the cells as compared to M26I Tat-DJ-1 proteins; whereas, control DJ-1 protein did not transduce into cells. Also, we confirmed the intracellular stability of Tat-DJ-1 proteins in RINm5F cells. The quantity of WT Tat-DJ-1 proteins persisted in the cells for 24 h, as compared to M26I Tat-DJ-1 proteins. Other studies have demonstrated lower and highly unstable mutant DJ-1 protein levels, as compared with WT DJ-1 protein (24, 25).

**Tat-DJ-1 protein inhibited cytokine-induced cellular cytotoxicity**

Pro-inflammatory cytokines such as IL-6, IL-1β, TNF-α and oxidative stress are major risk factors to induce pancreatic β-cell death, since antioxidant protein expression levels in pancreas tissues are lower than those found in other tissues (5, 7, 26). Thus, we determined whether Tat-DJ-1 protein protects against cytokine-induced RINm5F cell death using a MTT assay. As shown in Fig. 3A, WT Tat-DJ-1 protein markedly increased cell survival up to 67% against cytokine-induced cell death while M26I Tat-DJ-1 protein slightly increased cell survival (51%) and control DJ-1 protein did not affect cell survival compared to the survival (48%) of cytokine alone treated cell. In addition, we examined the effects of Tat-DJ-1 protein on cytokine-induced ROS production and DNA fragmentation. RINm5F cells were pretreated with Tat-DJ-1 protein for 1 h and exposed to cytokines. Subsequently, intracellular ROS levels were determined. Intracellular ROS levels were significantly increased by cytokines, while WT Tat-DJ-1 protein markedly reduced ROS levels compared to the levels of cytokine treated cells. However, M26I Tat-DJ-1 and control DJ-1 protein did not affect ROS production (Fig. 3B). We also determined DNA fragmentation levels. As shown in Fig. 3C, cytokines markedly increased the green fluorescence stained cells, as compared with the control cells. WT Tat-DJ-1 treated cells drastically reduced green fluorescence stained cells; whereas, M26I Tat-DJ-1 proteins treated cells showed slightly reduced staining and control DJ-1 protein did not affect DNA fragmentation in cytokine treated RINm5F cells. Previous studies have shown the protective effects of the overexpression of antioxidant proteins against pancreatic β-cell death caused by cytokine- or ROS-induced cellular toxicity (27, 28). In agreement with other studies, we have demonstrated that WT Tat-DJ-1 protein significantly protected against cytokine-induced RINm5F cell death. Our results demonstrated that WT Tat-DJ-1 proteins act as an antioxidant against cytokine-induced RINm5F cell death.

**Tat-DJ-1 protein inhibits cytokine-induced signaling in RINm5F cells**

Several studies have demonstrated that excesses of cytokines and oxidative stress lead to apoptosis via mitochondria dysfunction and intrinsic apoptosis pathways. The intrinsic apoptosis pathway is triggered by cytochrome c release from mitochondria. Released cytochrome c enhances the activation
Fig. 2. Tat-DJ-1 proteins transduced into RINm5F cells. Tat-DJ-1 (0.5-3 μM) proteins were added to the cell culture media for 1 h (A), Tat-DJ-1 (3 μM) proteins were added to the cell culture media for 5-60 min (B). The stability of Tat-DJ-1 proteins in RINm5F cells. The cells were treated with 3 μM Tat-DJ-1 proteins and incubated for 1-72 h, and analyzed by Western blotting and bands intensity was measured by densitometer (C).

Fig. 3. Effects of Tat-DJ-1 proteins on cytokine-induced cellular cytotoxicity. Tat-DJ-1 proteins (3 μM) were pretreat with RINm5F cells for 1 h and treated with cytokines (5 ng/ml IL-1β, 10 ng/ml TNF-α, and 10 ng/ml IFN-γ). Then cell viability was determined (A), ROS production (B), and DNA fragmentation (C) as described in Materials and Methods. *P < 0.01, compared with cytokine-treated cells.
of caspase-9, and subsequently the activation of caspase-3 that leads to cell death (29-31). In addition, anti-apoptotic protein Bcl-2 and pro-apoptotic protein Bax expression are involved with apoptotic cell death (32). Thus, we examined the effect of Tat-DJ-1 protein on cytokine-induced apoptotic signaling in RINm5F cells. Fig. 4 showed how WT Tat-DJ-1 protein significantly inhibited cytokine-induced cytochrome c release and activation of caspase-3, while M26l Tat-DJ-1 and control DJ-1 proteins showed little affect, as compared to WT Tat-DJ-1 protein. Also, we demonstrated that WT Tat-DJ-1 protein markedly increased Bcl-2 expression levels in cytokine exposed cells. In contrast, WT Tat-DJ-1 protein reduced Bax expression levels unlike M26l Tat-DJ-1 and control DJ-1 and showed similar expression levels compared to cytokine only treated control cells. These results indicated that WT Tat-DJ-1 protein has a protective function against cytokine-induced RINm5F cell death via regulation of cell survival signaling pathways. In this regard, WT Tat-DJ-1 protein has a beneficial effect against cytokines.

Taken together, we demonstrated that transduced WT Tat-DJ-1 protein has a beneficial protective effect against cytokine-induced RINm5F cell death, suggesting that WT Tat-DJ-1 protein is a potential therapeutic agent for DM.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials and cell culture
Cytokines (IL-1β, IFN-γ and TNF-α) were obtained from R&D system (Minneapolis, MN, USA). Primary, secondary, and β-actin antibodies were obtained from Cell Signaling Technology (Beverly, MA, USA) and Santa Cruz Biotechnology (Santa Cruz, CA, USA). Mutant M26l DJ-1 cDNA was obtained from Dr. Eun-Hye Joe (Ajou University). Tat peptides were purchased from PEPTRON (Daejeon, Korea). All other agents were of the highest grade available unless otherwise stated.

RINm5F cells, a pancreatic β-cell line, were purchased from the ATCC (Manassas, VA, USA) and grown in RPMI1640 medium containing 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) and antibiotics (100 μg/ml streptomycin, 100 U/ml penicillin) at 37°C in a humidity chamber with 5% CO2 and 95% air.

Construction and purification of Tat-DJ-1 protein
Tat expression vector was prepared as described previously (33). Briefly, human DJ-1 cDNA were amplified by PCR using the sense primer 5'–CTCGAGGCTTCCAAAAGAGC-3' and the antisense primer, 5'–GGATCCCTAGTCTTTAAGAA-3'. After PCR, the product was cloned in a TA cloning vector and ligated into the Tat expression vector.

The Tat-DJ-1 expression vectors were transformed into E. coli BL21 cells and induced with IPTG (0.5 mM) at 37°C for 3-4 h. Then, harvested cells were lysed and Tat-DJ-1 proteins...
were purified using affinity column chromatograph. Purified protein concentration was determined by the Bradford assay (34).

Confocal microscopy analysis
To examine the transduction of Tat-DJ-1 proteins into RINm5F cells, we performed double staining using Alexa fluor 488 and DAPI, as described previously (20). The obtained data were expressed as the means ± SD from three experiments. Differences among means were analyzed using one-way ANOVA and student’s t-test. P < 0.01 was significantly different.

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