CELL SUBPOPULATIONS DISPERSED FROM SOLID TUMOURS AND SEPARATED BY CENTRIFUGAL ELUTRIATION

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Summary.—The degree of non-neoplastic host-cell infiltration was assessed in 3 in vivo—in vitro tumour models commonly used in radiobiological studies: EMT6/Ro mammary carcinoma, 9L/Ro tumour and KHT sarcoma. While the 2 former tumour models have been shown to be moderately to highly immunogenic when grown s.c., the KHT sarcoma is apparently non-immunogenic. Using differential staining on single-cell suspensions from enzymatically dissociated solid tumours, all 3 tumour types were found to contain large proportions (30–60%) of non-neoplastic host cells. The actual host-cell component found in the cell suspensions differed both in type and percentage for the 3 tumours studied. These host and neoplastic cells in the cell suspensions prepared from the solid tumours could readily be separated by centrifugal elutriation. After separation the clonogenic potential of the neoplastic cells was assessed, and was found to be higher than the clonogenic capacity of the unseparated cell suspension by a factor directly related to the host/neoplastic cell ratio. Even after the removal of the host cells, the clonogenic capacities of the neoplastic EMT6 and 9L tumour cells were lower than that of the corresponding in vitro sublines (~30 vs ~75%). However, in the KHT sarcoma the removal of the host cell component raised the plating efficiency to ~60%, which was similar to the value for the in vitro cell subline of this tumour.

The interpretation of data obtained in single and combined-modality therapy studies using animal tumour models depends on the ability to assess the number of tumour cells killed by the treatment. This evaluation of cell kill in animal tumours has been greatly facilitated by the development of in vivo to in vivo or in vivo to in vitro clonogenicity assays (for reviews see Hill, 1980 and Rockwell, 1977, 1980). The in vivo to in vitro assays require the dissociation of the tumours after treatment in situ into single-cell suspensions, the inoculation of the cells into culture dishes and subsequent assessment of colony formation. Although such assays have added greatly to our understanding of radiobiology, results obtained from such excision assays do not always correlate with studies using in situ assays which allow the tumour to remain intact in the animal (Stephens & Peacock, 1977; Twentyman, 1980 for review).

There are many factors which could influence the formation of in vitro colonies of cells dissociated from solid tumours. One such factor arises from the observation that tumours may contain different proportions of neoplastic and non-neoplastic cells, and that these proportions may vary with tumour type (Evans, 1972; Russell et al., 1976; Stewart & Beetham, 1978; Lord, 1980). Since non-neoplastic cells may not be readily distinguishable

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from tumour cells when cell counts are made using vital stains under a light microscope, the presence of such cells in single-cell suspensions may artificially reduce the apparent clonogenic potential of neoplastic cells recovered from solid tumours. In addition, the question of what influence treatment may have on the non-neoplastic and neoplastic cell populations, particularly in experiments requiring tumour excision and dissociation as a function of time after treatment, such as are performed in studies evaluating repair of potentially lethal damage, needs to be considered. There is also some evidence that under certain conditions non-neoplastic cells obtained from tumours may be capable of colony formation in vitro (Stephens et al., 1978; Stewart & Beetham, 1978). It is therefore important to evaluate the proportion of host and neoplastic cells in tumours and to assess the role of the non-neoplastic cells in clonogenic cell-survival assays.

In this study the degree of host-cell infiltration in the EMT6/Ro tumour, the KHT sarcoma and the 9L/Ro rat tumour, 3 commonly used animal tumour models in experimental chemotherapy and radiobiology, was evaluated. Experiments also were performed, using centrifugal elutriation, to separate the cells dissociated from solid tumours of these 3 types into pure populations of host and neoplastic cells. The in vitro clonogenic potential of the separated population of neoplastic cells was then compared to the clonogenic potential of the corresponding cell lines grown as in vitro cell cultures.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**In vitro cell lines**

The EMT6/Ro (i.e. Rochester strain of EMT6) tumour-cell line was derived from the original tumour characterized by Rockwell et al. (1972). This cell line was grown as monolayer cells in Eagle’s basal medium (BME) plus 15% foetal calf serum (FCS) and kept at 37°C in a humidified 5% CO₂ atmosphere. Cells for plating efficiency experiments were obtained from exponentially growing cultures 1–3 days after seeding 1–5 × 10⁵ cells/100mm Petri dish.

The in vitro KHT sarcoma subline (KHTiv/l) was obtained by dissociating a solid KHT tumour and plating 10⁵ cells in 100mm Petri dishes containing α-minimum essential medium (α-MEM) supplemented with 10% FCS. These cells were passaged twice a week for 26 passages, and then a large pool of cells was frozen. Cells from this pool were routinely carried for experiments for 26 passages before returning to frozen stock. During these 26 passages the cell cultures grew reproducibly as an exponential population for 1–3 days after seeding (doubling time ~12–14 h) before reaching a plateau phase (Fig. 1). Plating efficiencies of the in vitro KHT subline were determined 2–3 days after the cells had been inoculated into Petri dishes.

9L/Ro, a subline of the 9L N-methyl-nitrosourea-induced rat brain tumour (Schmidek et al., 1971), was grown as monolayer cell cultures in BME containing 10% FCS (Wheeler et al., 1975). Plating efficiencies of this cell line were determined on exponentially growing cell cultures 2 days after seeding 2 × 10⁶ cells into 75cm² culture flasks. Both the KHT sarcoma and 9L/Ro tumour cultures were maintained at 37°C in a humidified 5% CO₂ atmosphere.

**Animals and in vivo tumour systems**

The EMT6/Ro subline was grown exponentially in vitro and harvested for tumour-cell inoculations by incubation in 0.05% trypsin (Siemann & Sutherland, 1980). KHT sarcoma cells (Kallman et al., 1967) were maintained in vivo and prepared from solid tumours by mechanical dissociation (Thomson & Rauth, 1974). For experiments, single-cell suspensions (2 × 10⁵ cells) of EMT6 and KHT sarcoma were injected i.m. into the hind limb of 8–14-week-old female BALB/cKa (Biobreeding Laboratories, Ottawa, Canada) and C3H/HeJ (Jackson Laboratories, Bar Harbor, Maine) respectively. S.c. implantation of exponentially growing 9L cells (10⁶ cells) into male Fisher 344 rats was performed as has been previously described (Wheeler & Wallen, 1980). In the EMT6 and KHT tumour models, tumours were usually excised and dissociated when they reached a weight of ~0.5 g; in the 9L studies tumours weighing ~1.0 g were usually used. In 9L tumour experiments assessing the effect of tumour size on the
Elutriation

The procedures for separating cells dispersed from solid tumours by elutriation (Beckman JE-6 elutriator) were modified (Keng & Wheeler, 1980; Keng et al., 1981a) from what had previously been described (Meistrich et al., 1977). Briefly, single-cell suspensions were dissociated from all 3 solid tumours and elutriated in ice-cold complete BME containing 10% FCS. During elutriation, the reservoir, rotor, and collection flasks were kept at 4°C. The flow rate during elutriation was kept constant at 45 ml/min (EMT6) or 35 ml/min (KHT and 9L). The elutriator system was sterilized with 70% ethanol the day before each run. Procedures for the elutriation separation of tumour cells were similar to those used for culture cells (Keng et al., 1980; Keng & Wheeler, 1980) with slight modifications to increase the cell yield with a minimal loss of homogeneity. All experiments used the Sanderson separation chamber. After loading the cells, the rotor speed was decreased in increments to 2000 ± 10 rev/min, a variable number of 40ml fractions being collected at each interval. The cells in each fraction were counted and their volume distributions measured using a Coulter Counter and Channelizer system (Model C1000). The median volume of each fraction was then determined from the median channel number of the volume distribution, using a previously determined
calibration constant obtained from plastic microspheres. Cells from the various fractions were counted and plated as described above.

**Cell-type identification**

For morphological analysis, 0.5 ml of a single-cell suspension containing 1–5 × 10^5 cells/ml of the unseparated tumour-cell population, or of the various subpopulations following separation by elutriation, was centrifuged for 5 min at 500 rev/min on a cytocentrifuge (Shandon-Elliott), air-dried and stained with Wright's Giemsa stain. After staining, at least 500 cells/slide were counted and scored as tumour cells, monocyte-macrophages, lymphocytes or granulocytes. Tumour cells were identified by their large size, their large euchromatic and irregular nuclei (which generally contained several large nucleoli) and their abundant, usually basophilic, cytoplasm. Macrophages were identified by their large size, eccentric, often lobulated nuclei, and abundant, usually highly vacuolated, cytoplasm. Lymphocytes were small, had a dense heterochromatic nuclear chromatin pattern and a thin rim of palely-staining cytoplasm. Granulocytes were easily distinguished by their distinctive highly lobulated nuclei and cytoplasmic granules.

**RESULTS**

In the initial experiments ~0.5g solid mouse tumours (EMT6 and KHT) or ~1.0g 9L rat tumours were dissociated and single-cell suspensions prepared as described in the Materials and Methods. Cytocentrifuge slides of these cell suspensions were prepared, stained, and the per-

Table I.—*Composition of cells recovered from enzymatically dissociated EMT6, KHT and 9L solid tumours*.

| Tumour | Macrophages | Lymphocytes | Granulocytes |
|--------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| EMT6   | 37.1±5.1    | 37.8±9.7    | 11.7±6.1     | 13.3±5.5     |
| KHT    | 59.9±7.5    | 30.7±5.2    | 6.3±3.0      | 3.4±1.8      |
| 9L     | 54.4±6.7    | 19.2±5.8    | 18.6±7.8     | 8.1±4.1      |

* Tumours used were ~0.4–0.6 g (EMT6, KHT) and ~1.0 g (9L).
+ Mean of 9–10 experiments, each using 1–6 tumours to prepare the suspension.

percentages of each of the cell types determined. The results (Table I) illustrate that the cell suspensions of all 3 tumour types contained a considerable proportion of non-neoplastic host cells. However, both the proportions and types of non-neoplastic cells were found to vary considerably between the 3 systems. For example, whereas the suspensions prepared from EMT6 tumours contained only 30–40% neoplastic cells and a variety of host-cell types including macrophages, lymphocytes and granulocytes, the suspensions obtained from KHT sarcomas are made up primarily of neoplastic cells (~60%) and macrophages (~30%) with few of the other infiltrating cell types (~10%). When the KHT and 9L tumour results are compared, it can further be seen that, even though in these 2 tumour models the percentage of neoplastic cells recovered was about the same, the proportion of the various types of host cells was very different.

To evaluate whether the type of enzymatic procedure chosen affected the host/neoplastic cell ratio or the type of host cell recovered, a variety of different enzymatic dissociation techniques were applied to the 3 tumour models. In these studies (Table II) each tumour sample was divided into thirds and then disaggregated by one of 3 enzymatic dissociation techniques. Using the different enzymes had little effect on the host/neoplastic cell ratio, except when EMT6 tumours were disaggregated with trypsin plus DNAse. It should be noted, however, that unlike the other tumour systems studied, in the EMT6 tumour, disaggregation with trypsin and DNAse gave a 10-fold reduction in the total cell recovery: a finding similar to the observations of others using trypsin dissociation with EMT6 tumours (Twentyman & Yuhas, 1980). Consequently, the apparent decrease in the percentage of host cells recovered under these conditions does not represent an absolute increase in the recovered neoplastic cells. However, the observed changes in the proportion of host and tumour cells recovered, in
Table II.—Effect of different enzyme dissociation techniques on the proportion of host and neoplastic cells recovered*  

| Dissociation technique | EMT6 Host cells (%) | EMT6 Tumour cells (%) | KHT Host cells (%) | KHT Tumour cells (%) | 9L Host cells (%) | 9L Tumour cells (%) |
|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
|                        | Unrec. PE           | Unrec. PE             | Unrec. PE         | Unrec. PE           | Unrec. PE        | Unrec. PE          |
| Trypsin†               | 48.2                | 51.8                  | 40.5              | 59.5                | 34.3             | 65.7               |
| Enzyme cocktail‡       | 66.0                | 34.0                  | 34.8              | 65.2                | 34.2             | 60.3               |
| Protease IX§           | 70.2                | 29.8                  | 37.3              | 62.7                | 28.1             | 73.3               |

* Values shown are the average of 2 "tumour thirds" experiments (see text), except for the 9L tumour which represents a single determination.
† 0.2% trypsin plus 0.02% DNAse for 30 min (EMT6, KHT); 0.25% trypsin alone for 30 min (9L).
‡ 0.02% DNAse, 0.025% collagenase and 0.025% pronase for 30-45 min.
§ 1 mg protease IX/ml of complete medium for 30–60 min (Twentyman & Yuhas, 1980).

this case a preferential loss of macrophages (by ~20%), does illustrate a difficulty which may arise when enzymatic dissociation techniques with poor cell recovery are used. With all other dissociation procedures the percentage of the various types of host cells found in the cell suspensions prepared from EMT6, KHT, or 9L tumours did not differ significantly from those in Table I. Also, no significant differences were found between the plating efficiencies of cells from a given tumour type prepared by the 3 disaggregation procedures.

Centrifugal elutriation was used in an attempt to separate the host and neoplastic cells derived from the dissociated solid tumours. Fig. 2 shows that this can be readily achieved in all 3 tumour types studied, such that cell fractions containing more than 90–95% neoplastic cells can be routinely obtained. The plating efficiencies (PEs) of the cells recovered from the various fractions were also determined (Fig. 3). For comparison, the PE ± s.d. of cells growing in the exponential phase of the corresponding in vitro sublines was found to be 78.0 ± 3.2% (EMT6) 60.8 ± 15.9% (KHT) and 78.4 ± 7.2% (9L). For all 3 systems, the data (Fig. 3) show that removing the host cells from the cell suspension before plating raises PE by a factor corresponding to the size of the host-cell component in the unseparated cell suspension. Nevertheless, for both the EMT6 and 9L tumour systems, the PE of pure populations of neoplastic cells obtained after separation never reaches the PE of their corresponding in vitro sublines. However, in the third tumour system, the KHT sarcoma, the PE of separated tumour cells reaches ~60%, which is similar to the value achieved with the in vitro derivative of this tumour-cell line. In none of these tumour systems do non-neoplastic cells form colonies in the in vitro clonogenic cell-survival assay.

All the separation and plating studies described in Figs 2 and 3 attempted to use tumours of a given size. To determine whether tumour size influences the ability to separate host and neoplastic cells, or the subsequent PE of the tumour cells, experiments using rat 9L tumours weighing 0.25 and 0.5 g were carried out. The results (Fig. 4) show little difference between tumours of these sizes and ~1g tumours (see Fig. 3) and suggest that, at least in the 9L tumour, the present findings are not strongly tumour-size-dependent. Studies over a range of tumour sizes have not been done with the other two tumour models.

**DISCUSSION**

Before the present investigation, limited experiments like those described previously by Keng et al. (1981b) using flow cytometry were performed on unseparated cell populations prepared from solid tumours. In these experiments host-cell proportions, determined from DNA histograms by computer analysis, were found
to be similar to the more extensive results based on cytocentrifuge analysis, shown in Table I. In addition, in the flow-cytometry studies of Keng et al. (1981b), which showed that a small proportion of host cells (≈ 5%) always persisted in the tumour-cell subpopulations separated by elutriation, this percentage also correlated well with the percentage of host cells determined by cytocentrifuge analysis. Consequently, in the present investigation, the proportions of infiltrating host and neoplastic cells in the suspensions of enzymatically dissociated tumours of the 3 types were determined strictly on the basis of cell morphology. The results (Table I) showed that all 3 tumour models...
contained a considerable proportion of non-neoplastic cells in the suspensions prepared from the tumours. The type and percentage of host cells varied between the tumour systems, but in each case the proportion of non-neoplastic cells was 30–60% of the total cells recovered.

Both the EMT6 and 9L tumours, when grown s.c., have been demonstrated to be moderately to highly immunogenic, by the criteria of TD50 (cell number required to induce tumours in 50% of the animals) after pre-immunization with radiation-sterilized cells or whole-body irradiation of the hosts. With these two pre-treatments, the TD50 values have been shown to vary by factors as large as 10^3 in these two tumour systems (Rockwell & Hahn, 1974; Rockwell, 1980; Wheeler, 1981). Thus it is not surprising that considerable host-cell infiltration occurred in the EMT6 and 9L tumours. Using the same criteria of tumour immunogenicity the KHT sarcoma, however, has been judged in several laboratories to be non-immunogenic (i.e., neither pre-immunization nor whole-body irradiation of the host have changed the TD50; Kallman et al., 1967; Hill & Bush, 1969). Yet in cell suspensions prepared from KHT sarcomas ~40% of the cells recovered were non-neoplastic primarily macrophages (Table I). Although non-neoplastic cells in cell suspensions prepared from some tumour types can readily be distinguished on the basis of size, in the KHT sarcoma these macrophages are extremely difficult to distinguish from neoplastic cells, which are almost identical in size. Thus, even cell suspensions prepared from non-immunogenic tumours can contain a substantial proportion of non-neoplastic cells which may not be readily distinguishable by the use of vital stains.

Although the removal of the host cells from the cell suspension enhanced the measured *in vitro* PE of the neoplastic cells, only for cells derived from KHT sarcomas did the PE rise to a value similar to that obtained from the *in vitro* subline of this tumour (Fig. 3). A possible explanation for the low PE in cells derived from EMT6 and 9L tumours, even after removal of the host cells, is that the *in vivo* conditions during tumour growth (e.g. nutrient deprivation) reduce the PE of these cells. Alternatively, the fact that the 2 tumour models in which the PE remained below that in the *in vitro* cell line are immunogenic needs to be considered. Conceivably some of the neoplastic cells in these tumours suffer some form of immunological attack before tumour excision and dissociation, and despite appearing viable after elutriation are doomed to die. Experiments to test this latter possibility are currently in progress.

Clearly, the evaluation of non-neoplastic and neoplastic cell populations in enzy-
matically prepared cell suspension of solid tumours requires further study. Radiation and/or chemotherapeutic treatments of tumours, followed by excision assays to determine clonogenic cell survival, need to be examined for the effects of such treatments on the various subpopulations of cells. For example, if the treatment preferentially affects the host or neoplastic cells, this could influence the measured surviving fraction. Such an effect could be particularly important in studies assessing tumour-cell survival as a function of time after treatment. Centrifugal elutriation should make such investigations possible. In this study, cell fractions containing >95% host cells could also be obtained by centrifugal elutriation. This host-cell population could then be elutriated further to allow the separation of macrophages, lymphocytes and granulocytes (Lord, 1980; Lord & Keng, 1980). The cytotoxicity of the various host-cell types obtained from dissociated solid tumours thus could be assessed. Initial studies (Lord, 1980; Lord & Keng, 1980) have shown that the host cells recovered from EMT6 tumours demonstrate in vitro anti-tumour activity. Further, since the peripheral immune response measured using spleen cells of the same tumour-bearing animals may not reflect the response of the infiltrating cells recovered from the tumours (Lord, 1980), centrifugal elutriation can aid in the delineation of the cell(s) responsible for in vivo anti-tumour immune responses. Also, experiments to evaluate the influence of tumour treatments or immune-response stimulation on the proportion and function of the host cells would be possible.

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