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Volume 42, 2010 - Issue 7

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Molecular Pathology

A variant in microRNA-196a2 is associated with susceptibility to hepatocellular carcinoma in Chinese patients with cirrhosis

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Pages 669-673 | Received 11 May 2010, Accepted 13 Jul 2010, Published online: 17 Nov 2010

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Abstract

Aims: Cirrhosis is an important risk factor for hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) in China, while little is known of the genetic susceptibility to hepatocarcinogenesis. Traditional approaches to identification of novel genetic predisposition genes have focused on protein encoding genes. There is evidence to suggest that microRNAs (miRNA) may play an important role in tumorigenesis. Recent studies have implicated that the rs11614913 SNP in miR-196a2 may be associated with susceptibility to lung cancer, congenital heart disease, breast cancer, as well as reduced survival in non-small cell lung cancer. This study aims to assess whether this functional polymorphism can influence the susceptibility to HCC in Chinese patients with cirrhosis.

Methods: 120 Chinese patients with cirrhosis and 120 healthy controls were recruited. The rs11614913 SNP in miR-196a2 was genotyped by PCR-RFLP. The expression levels of miR-196a2 were measured by real-time PCR. The association between the rs11614913 SNP and the expression levels of miR-196a2 was analyzed by logistic regression.

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Results: The frequency of the CC genotype among HCC patients was higher than that in the control group, implying that the cirrhotic patients with the CC genotype or C allele containing genotypes (CT and CC) may have a higher risk of HCC. However, in a subsequent analysis of the association between this polymorphism and clinicopathological characteristics, there was an association between rs11614913 genotype and tumour size ($p=0.046$), but not with tumour number, grade, stage, invasiveness or Child-Pugh grade. In a genotype-phenotype correlation analysis using 59 tumour tissues of liver, rs11614913 CC or carrying at least one C allele was associated with significantly increased mature miR-196a expression ($p=0.006$ or $=0.002$).

Conclusions: Our results suggest, for the first time, that miR-196a2 polymorphism may contribute to cirrhosis-related HCC susceptibility in Chinese patients through influencing mature miR-196a expression.

Key words: Cirrhosis hepatocellular carcinoma MiR-196a2 single nucleotide polymorphism

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