Mechanism of Action of a Human Anti-CD70 Antibody-MGBA Conjugate and Efficacy in a Nude Rat Model of Renal Carcinoma

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Introduction

A series of antibody conjugates have been designed using human antibodies from transgenic mice linked to synthetic DNA minor-groove binding alkylating (MGBA) agents. A key feature of these conjugates is that the attached cytotoxic is in a prodrug form and requires not only release from the antibody for activity, but also cleavage of a 4-carbon ester group to release the active moiety. The attachment of such a prodrug may give additional safety advantages over conventional antibody conjugates of cytotoxic drugs. We have established that activation of the prodrug is achieved by several esterases both within tumor cells and in several normal tissues, including plasma. The level of relevant esterase activity in man has been shown to be very similar to that observed in rats and non-human primates, although less than that observed in mouse. Therefore we have examined efficacy of anti-CD70 MGBA conjugates in a nude rat model of renal carcinoma. In this model, Caki-1 cells are grown as a subcutaneous tumor xenograft with treatment by i.p. administration. Efficacy of the antibody conjugate is clearly observed with single low dose therapy, whereas multi-dose therapy leads to complete tumor regression. Safety studies at larger doses have been carried out and demonstrated a substantial potential therapeutic window for the anti-CD70 conjugate. These studies support the role of CD70 as a viable ADC target for renal cell carcinoma.

Duocarmycin (KW-2189)

MED-2219 is a synthetic minor-groove binding alkylating agent (MGBA) with a 4'-carbonate protecting group. This is the same group used on the compound KW-2189 which is a duocarmycin that has been studied in several phase II clinical trials as a free chemotherapy agent. Cleavage of the 4-carbonate group is required for activation of these compounds as shown below. This is achieved by esterase action, in a similar manner to the activation of the drug irinotecan (CPT-11) which is cleaved to SN-38 in vivo.

Activation of MGBA

CD70 ADC Therapy of Established Caki-1 Xenografts in SCID mice

Single Dose & Multi-Dose Therapy of Established Tumors

Efficacy of anti-CD70 ADC on established Caki-1 cCC xenografts grown in SCID mice. SCID mice have high plasma esterase activity and therefore activate the ADC rapidly. ADC was dosed either once at 0.1 or 0.3 µmol/kg, or twice at a dose of 0.1 µmol/kg at day 0 and day 14. All dosing i.p. Data is presented as the median of groups of 8 mice.

Plasma Esterase Activation of MGBA

Activation of the MGBA can take place in tumor, tissues or in the circulation. To assess the relative activation rates in plasma, drug was incubated for up to three days in plasma from different species and the % conversion monitored. Mass spec data was used to verify the nature of the conversion. Data was in agreement with the % esterase activity in mouse is very high, whereas activity is lower in the other species tested. Activity in rat plasma was very similar to that observed in human suggesting that the rat is an excellent species in which to assess the role of plasma esterase in activation of the ADC. Comparative xenograft studies were therefore carried out with the human cCRCC cell line Caki-1 in SCID mice and nude rats.

Carboxylesterase is also involved in activation of CPT-11 (Irinotecan):

Carboxylesterases are present both in plasma and tissues. Activation can therefore take place either in the circulation or in tissues. For CPT-11 (irinotecan) activation appears to take place in both compartments (Sanghani et al. 2003 Clin. Cancer Res. 9, 4883-4891). Human carboxylesterase II is a major enzyme involved in activation of CPT-11.

Conclusions

Antibody drug conjugates with DNA minor-groove binding alkylating (MGBA) agents are a novel class of ADCs with attractive properties for development. We have observed that ADCs produced with MGABs protected with a 4' carbamate group are potent and efficacious in a range of xenograft models as well as being extremely well tolerated (see Poster Number 4061). The wide therapeutic window observed is due to the stability of the antibody conjugate and the nature of the drug itself. In this case the drug attached to the antibody is an esterase activated prodrug, which can be activated by a range of human carboxylesterases. The approved anti-cancer drug CPT-12 is also activated by carboxylesterases. In this study we have demonstrated that activation in rat plasma is similar to the rate of activation in human plasma, and thus the rat is a useful model for the rate of activation of the ADC. Efficacy studies in the nude rat have demonstrated good anti-tumor efficacy at well tolerated doses. These studies support the role of CD70 as a viable ADC target for renal carcinoma and other CD70 expressing malignancies.