Original Article

Employing PCR Technique in Assessment of Monoclonality in Large B-cell Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma

Noushin Lotfi1, Maryam Rastin1, Parisa Shoaei2, Bahram Memar3, Nafiseh Sadat Tabasi1, Zohreh Mahmoudi1, Reza Alimohammadi1, Bahman Yousefi1, *Mahmoud Mahmoudi1

1Immunology Research Center, School of Medicine, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran; 2Nososomial Infection Research Center, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran; 3Department of Pathology, School of Medicine, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran; 4School of Medicine, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran.

Received Jun 23, 2015; accepted Oct 10, 2015

Introduction: Most B-cell malignancies are diagnosed based on morphologic and immunohistochemical criteria. Some cases, however, still present a challenge for the pathologist to determine between reactive hyperplasia and neoplastic disorders. Molecular techniques can be used as a helpful diagnostic tool in these cases. In this study, we assessed the value of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technique in determination of monoclonality of immunoglobulin heavy chain gene rearrangements for the diagnosis of large B-cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL) in paraffin embedded tissue samples. Methods: DNA was extracted from paraffin embedded tissues of 44 diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL) cases and 20 samples of reactive lymphoid tissues from appendix and tonsils as control. Framework 3 and the joining region (FR3/JH) of the variable segment of the immunoglobulin heavy chain gene were amplified using degenerated primers. PCR products from each sample were analyzed on 8% polyacrylamide gels following AgNO3 staining. Results: Monoclonal rearrangements were identified in 33 of 44 cases (75%) of DLBCL using FR3/JH primers. Monoclonal IgH gene rearrangements were not detected in any of the reactive lymphoid hyperplastic samples. All these control cases showed polyclonal pattern. Conclusion: Through PCR analysis, using degenerated primers, monoclonality was demonstrated in 75% of DLBCL cases. This technique can thus be used as a sensitive, reliable and valuable diagnostic supplement to conventional morphologic examination and immunohistocytochemical evaluation of lymphoproliferative disorders, particularly in cases with restrictions in amount or type of analytic material. J Med Microbiol Infec Dis, 2014, 2 (3): 121-124.

Keywords: Immunoglobulin Gene, PCR, Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

INTRODUCTION

High prevalence of non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (NHL) [1, 2, 3, 4] and the difficulty of distinguishing between non neoplastic lymphoproliferative lesion and malignant neoplasms is a diagnostic problem in the field of lymphatic system pathology [5]. The majority of these malignancies will be diagnosed by immunophenotyping and morphologic markers, however these methods are not always useful to establish the diagnosis. Therefore, other molecular methods, such as determination of clonality using PCR, can be helpful.

Lymphocytes are the only cells which physiologically undergo somatic rearrangement. In the early stages of B-cell development, heavy chains of immunoglobulins (Igs) are rearranged. During this process, a D segment is joined to a J segment, and then this complex recombines to a V segment. [6, 7]. In normal lymphoid populations, rearrangement is done randomly and leads to the production of antibody repertoire, however in neoplastic populations rearrangement occurs in one clone and leads to monoclonality.

There are various methods to evaluate the rearrangement of Ig genes in order to examine the monoclonality in B-cell neoplasms [8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13]. Hybridization methods such as southern blot analysis, has a high validity, but it requires a lot of fresh tissue, as well as radioisotopes [14, 15]. Therefore using these methods in small samples like endoscopic, and in paraffin embedded specimens is not possible. These methods are also expensive, difficult to perform and time consuming.

Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) is another method to evaluate B-cell monoclonality which requires small amounts of tissue, and has acceptable accuracy, high speed and the possibility to use paraffin embedded tissues [8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16]. In this study, we assessed the value of PCR technique in determination of monoclonality of immunoglobulin heavy chain gene rearrangements for the diagnosis of large B-cell non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma in paraffin embedded tissue samples.

*Correspondence: Mahmoud Mahmoudi
Immunology Research Center, Bu Ali Research Institute, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Bu Ali Sq., Mashhad, Iran, 9196773113.
Email: mahmoudim@mums.ac.ir
Tel: +98 (51) 38022229 Fax: +98 (51) 37112596

http://jommid.pasteur.ac.ir
Monaclonality assessment in B-cell NHL

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

**Patients.** 44 samples of paraffin-embedded tissues with the diagnosis of diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL) from different body areas were chosen from the archive of the Pathology Department of Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran. These samples were then evaluated by a pathologist using immunohistochemistry with default markers and H&E staining to confirm the diagnosis. Furthermore, 20 samples from benign reactive lymphoid tissues of tonsils and appendix were used as controls.

**DNA extraction.** 5 µm sections were cut from paraffin embedded samples and transferred to 1.5 ml microtubes. 1000 µl of Octane (Sigma, St. Louis, USA) was added and incubated at room temperature for 30 min, then were inverted 2 or 3 times. Then tubes were centrifuged for 5 min at 14000 rpm. The supernatant was removed and 500 µl of 95% ethanol was added and centrifuged for 1 min at 14000 rpm. Then 2 or 3 drops of acetone were added and allowed to evaporate for 10 min, afterwards, 100 µl of digestion buffer containing 100 µg Proteinase K (Sigma, St. Louis, USA) was added and incubated overnight at 37ºC. Then proteinase K was inactivated by heating at 95ºC for 10 min. After centrifugation at 8000 rpm for 1 min the supernatant, including DNA, was separated and stored at -20ºC.

**PCR with β actin primers.** To confirm the quality of the extracted DNA, PCR was performed for all samples using β actin primers, and PCR products were electrophoresed in 2% agarose gel. Samples that did not have a distinct band of β actin primers, and PCR products were electrophoresed in 2% agarose gel. Samples that did not have a distinct band of β actin primers, and PCR products were electrophoresed in 2% agarose gel. Samples that did not have a distinct band of β actin primers, and PCR products were ele

**PropAmer.** After the PCR reaction, a 1 µl PCR product was electrophoresed on 8% polyacrylamide gel followed by AgNO3 staining.

**RESULTS**

Twenty six of cases in our study with DLBCL diagnosis were male (59.1%) and 18 cases (40.9%) were female. The most prevalent age was 41 to 60 years followed by 61 to 90. Neck, nasopharynx and axilla were the most common sites of involvement in our study group. To confirm the diagnosis, all cases were studied by immunohistochemical method using CD20, CD3, LCA, cytokeratin markers and H&E staining. In cases that were CD20 and LCA positive, but CD3 and cytokeratin negative, were selected as definite DLBCL samples (Figures 1, 2). The criterion for monoclonality assessment of lymphocytes residing in tissues using PCR method is detecting a monoclonal band in electrophoresis. In polyclonal samples, because of rearrangements in different clones, the PCR method shows a smear pattern. In this study, paraffin embedded tissues were analyzed. In 33 out of 44 cases (75%) after PCR with designed primer for FR3/JH region, an obvious monoclonal band (125 bp) was seen, while in control samples from reactive hyperplasic tissues, no monoclonal band was detectable. All these cases had a smear pattern denoting a polyclonal rearrangement (Figures 3, 4, 5).

**DISCUSSION**

Previous studies on monoclonality detection in lymphomas with B-cell origin have led to various results. Yanchi-Tai et al. reported the presence of monoclonality in 54.3% of cases with the use of designed primers for FR3/JH region in paraffin embedded tissues [17]. Adan Bagg et al. in 2002 reported monoclonality in 47% of paraffin embedded tissue samples with B-cell lymphoma [18]. Timep Gurbity et al. have reported monoclonality in 55% of cases [6].
Poor results of previous studies might be related to chromosomal translocation between bcl2 or bcl6 genes and Ig heavy chain genes due to somatic hypermutation and poor primer design [19, 20]. Somatic hypermutation happens in the germinal center of differentiating B-cells. Target regions of hypermutation are framework (FR) and complementarity determining regions (CDR) of variable portions of Ig heavy chain, which may cause primer mismatch. Designing family specific primers can overcome this problem, and that is why in this study, designing new degenerate primers, increased the diagnosis of monoclonality up to 75% using FR3/JH primers.

Another factor which may affect the results is the type of samples [21, 22, 23]. In KJ Trainor study, which was performed on fresh tissues, the percentage of monoclonality detection with the use of FR3/JH primers was 83%. [24, 25, 26]. The probable cause of this higher level of monoclonality detection in their study was probably the absence of tissue fixatives, which are considered to be PCR inhibitors, on the other hand during tissue fixation steps, DNA might be degraded.

We have shown, PCR can be used as a reliable, sensitive and valuable method in the assessment of lymphoproliferation disorders next to conventional methods, particularly in the case of small and paraffin embedded tissue samples (such as needle aspirates and endoscopic biopsies). It must be also taken into consideration that designing suitable primers is crucial in order to achieve more reliable outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
The authors are grateful to research council of Mashhad university of Medical Science for financial support of this study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this manuscript.

REFERENCES


