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Exploring a Link Between Spy1 and Hepatocellular Carcinoma Progression

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Spy1 and Hepatocellular Carcinoma Progression: Exploring a Link in a Murine Model

Presented by: Carlee Stoyanovich
Honors Thesis Project 2016
Hepatocellular Carcinoma (HCC)

- The most aggressive and prevalent form of primary liver cancer
- In men, it is the 5th most common cancer and in women it is the 7th worldwide
- Current treatments are invasive and include: transplantation, resection, ablation and chemotherapy
- The 5-year survival rate is 20%

http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/liver_tumor_center/conditions/cancerous_liver_tumors/hepatocellular_carcinoma.html
The Progression

Diet/Lifestyle Factors

Hepatitis B/C

Alcoholism

Fatty Liver Disease

Steatohepatitis

Fibrosis

Cirrhosis

HCC

A Protective Mechanism

**p53**
- Tumor suppressor
- Halts the cell cycle during unfavorable conditions
- Regulates cell death (apoptosis)
- Aids in DNA repair
- In HCC normally inactivated or mutated

**Spy1**
- Speed up cell division
- Override cell cycle barriers
- Enhance stemness in cell populations
- Known role in breast and brain cancers
MMTV-Spy1 Mouse

- Designed to study breast cancer in mice models
- Constitutively overexpress Spy1 in the mammary gland

B6CBAF1/J genetic background
HCC in the Spy1 Mouse Model

- MMTV-Spy1 male mice with high levels of Spy1 have significantly more HCC than their male littermate controls.
A Potential Mechanism?

Does an increase in Spy1 levels predispose the liver to HCC development?
Objectives

• Further characterize the MMTV-Spy1 liver phenotype.

• Develop a model to look at HCC progression in wild-type mice.

• Quantify Spy1 protein levels in the wild-type damaged mice livers.

• Monitor fat accumulation as well as p53 and TNF-alpha levels in the mice livers.
Effects of Spy1 on Liver Morphology

- Normal hepatocytes
- Large vacuoles
- Disordered cell structure

Healthy liver +1yr control mouse → Fat accumulation +1yr MMTV-Spy1 mouse → HCC +1yr MMTV-Spy1 mouse
Fat Accumulation in MMTV-Spy1 Mice

10 month control mouse

10 month MMTV-Spy1 mouse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>MMTV-Spy1</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oil Red O Stain Area</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cntrl n = 13, MMTV-Spy1 n = 12
*p-value = 0.000530852
Spy1 Increases Indices of Cell Division

The percentage of bi-nucleated cells are significantly higher in control mice.
The Progression in MMTV-Spy1 Mice

- Increased fat accumulation
- Increased HCC
- Decreased bi-nucleated cells
- Decreased nucleated cells
The Progression in MMTV-Spy1 Mice

Healthy liver → NAFLD → NASH → Cirrhosis + Fibrosis → Hepato-cellular carcinoma

Trichrome stain of +1yr MMTV-Spy1 mouse

Collagen
The Methionine Choline Deficient (MCD) Diet

- Produces the most severe NASH phenotype in the shortest timeframe
- Causes increased fat accumulation in the hepatocytes
- Induces:
  - Inflammation
  - Apoptosis
  - Oxidative damage
  - Fibrosis
  - Increased serum alanine aminotransferase levels
When do endogenous Spy1 levels peak?
The MCD Diet Experiment

Healthy Mouse → Fat Accumulation → Fibrosis

Day 0 - Mice are placed on diets

Day 2

1 week

6 weeks

Collect Liver Tissue

MCD Diet

Amino Acid Control Diet

- Same genetic background as MMTV-Spy1 mice
- Male mice between 8-12 weeks of age
Tissue Collection and Analysis

Formalin

H+E Staining

Immunohistochemistry

Analyze gene expression

Flash Frozen in Liquid Nitrogen

Quantify protein levels

4% paraformaldehyde

Monitor fat accumulation
Fat Accumulation in MCD Mice

Day 2 control
Day 2 MCD

1 week control
1 week MCD

6 week control
6 week MCD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Stained</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>1 week MCD</th>
<th>6 week MCD</th>
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<td>150000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*significant difference
Fibrosis in MCD Mice

MCD mice had clear collagen deposition as compared to the controls.
Spy 1 and p53 Levels

MCD Diet (NASH) → Activate p53 → Halt the cell cycle → Apoptosis

**Spy 1 Protein** (densitometry corrected for actin):
- Control
- Day 2
- 1 week MCD
- 6 week

**p53 Protein** (densitometry corrected for actin):
- Control
- Day 2
- 1 week MCD
- 6 week
TNF-alpha Gene Expression

MCD Diet (NASH) → Inflammation → TNF-alpha activation

**Relative Quantification** log_{10} TNF-alpha vs GAPDH

- Control
- Day 2
- 1 week
- 6 week

* indicates statistical significance.
MCD Mice Progression

Healthy Mouse
Day 0

Stress Response

Day 2

Fat Accumulation

1 week

Healthy Mouse

6 weeks

Fat Accumulation
Spy1 Protein
p53 Protein
TNF-alpha Gene Expression
Collagen Deposition

Inflammatory Phase

Fibrotic Phase
Revised Timeline of Progression

Healthy Liver → NAFLD → NASH

Proliferation → Fibrosis, Cirrhosis → HCC

Spy1 as a prognostic indicator

↑ p53 ↑ Spy1

Related:
Balance in the Face of Damage

- Restores damaged hepatocytes
- Compensatory hyperplasia
- Allows for regeneration

- Maintains overall integrity of the organ
- Inflammation
- Formation of scar tissue
- Deposit collagen and fibrin
Does Proliferation Favor HCC Over Fibrosis?

In response to an increase in fat accumulation and damage to hepatocytes, Spy1 will be up-regulated to increase regeneration and proliferative ability and decrease fibrosis.
Future Steps

Developing a Spy1 driven mouse and follow it’s progression on the MCD diet
Acknowledgements

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