

Emerging Role of Galectin-3 in Pulmonary Artery Hypertension

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Received: May 21, 2018; Accepted: May 31, 2018; Published: June 22, 2018

Sponsoring information: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Abstract

Pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH) is multifactorial disadptive disease with poor clinical outcomes associated with increased pulmonary artery pressure resulting in primary small-to-moderate pulmonary artery remodeling. Numerous factors, including smooth muscle cell proliferation, vasospasm, vascular fibrosis and occlusion, direct vascular injury and inflammation, impaired repair of vasculature, are involved in the pathogenesis of PAH. It has been suggested that galectin-3 as a biomarker of excessive fibrosis and inflammation can be useful predictor of both severity and prognosis in patient with PAH. The short communication is reported that elevated Gal-3 levels were found in majority patients with PAH depending on clinical status and of the disease. Although elevated Gal-3 levels were associated with a higher risk of all-cause mortality, cardiovascular mortality, and right ventricle heart failure, the value of this biomarker in PAH patients at high risk stratification is uncertain and requires to be investigated in large clinical trials.

Keywords: pulmonary hypertension, galectin-3, cardiovascular risk, biomarkers

1. Introduction

Pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH) is a steadily progressive maladaptive disease with potentially fatal consequences that has been demonstrated increasing prevalence worldwide (Lai, Y.C. et al., 2014). Nature evolution of PAH closely related to vascular remodeling and endothelial dysfunction that lead to obstruction of small-to-moderate pulmonary arteries, resulting in increased pulmonary artery pressures and pulmonary vascular resistance associated with uncoupling oxygen supply and blood saturation, hypoxia, right ventricle heart failure and multi organ insufficiency (Galiè N. et al., 2015; Hoeper, M. M. et al., 2013). There were found numerous factors, which contributed to several faces of the PAH including smooth muscle cell proliferation, vasospasm, vascular fibrosis and occlusion, direct vascular injury and inflammation, impaired repair of vasculature (Yu, J. et al., 2013). All these factors corresponding to imbalance of vasodilators (nitric oxide - NO, and prostacyclin) and vasoconstrictors (endothelin-1 - ET-1, thromboxane A₂) are crucial for clinical presentation, severity and prognosis of the disease (Sobolewski, A., et al., 2008). In fact, dysregulation these factors via increased oxidase (NADPH oxidase family, xanthine and aldehyde oxidases) activity and bone morphogenetic protein receptor-2 signaling mechanism produce reactive oxygen species (superoxide, hydrogen peroxide, peroxynitrite) that disrupt canonic NO synthase pathway, lead to mitochondrial dysfunction and inflammation, potentiate proliferative response of the vasculature cells, mediate thickness and fibrosis of pulmonary artery vasculature (Bowers, R. et al., 2004; Bryant AJ. et al., 2016). In this context, excessive inflammation and fibrosis are core players in pathogenesis of PAH corresponding to severity and prognosis of the disease, and biomarkers reflecting both faces of pathogenesis of PAH, such as galectin-3, could be predict nature evolution of the disease and prognosticate a risk of poor clinical outcomes. The aim of the short communication is to summarize knowledge regarding the role of galectin-3 in risk stratification of PAH patients.

2. Galectin-3: Biological Role in PAH

Galectin-3 (Gal-3) is beta-galactoside binding lectin that is synthesized and secreted by inflammatory cytokine-activated macrophages / mononuclears (Vasta G. R., 2012). Gal-3 was found a useful biomarker with high predictive importance in heart failure risk stratification (Gehlken, C. et al., 2018). Previous studies have shown

that Gal-3 was up-regulated in adventitia of pulmonary arteries of hypoxia-induced PAH and it regulated the proliferation, differentiation, and accumulation of extracellular matrix by synthesis of collagen and other fibrotic components (Luo, H. et al., 2017). Gal-3 exhibited pro-fibrotic effects interacting of platelet-derived growth factor (Guo, S., & Feng, Z., 2015), transforming growth factor-beta-1 (TGF- β 1), matrix metalloproteinase-9 (MMP-9) (Wang, X. et al., 2017) and NADPH oxidase 4 (He, J. et al., 2017a). Interestingly, TGF- β 1 was able to promote the expression of Gal-3 and its translocation, while blockage of STAT3 suppressed the expression of Gal-3 induced by TGF- β 1 (He, J. et al., 2017a). Thus, TGF- β 1-dependent vascular fibrosis is mediated by Gal-3 / MMP-9 / STAT3 signaling cascade. Additionally, an inhibition of Gal-3 led to reduced hypoxia-induced inflammatory response in human pulmonary arterial endothelial cells and human pulmonary arterial smooth muscle cells (He, J. et al., 2017b). This effect associated with suppressed realizing of tumor necrosis factor-alpha and interleukin-1, reduced expression of intercellular adhesion molecule-1 and switching phenotype of human pulmonary arterial smooth muscle cells from a “contractile” to a “synthetic” (Hao, M., Li, M., & Li, W., 2017). Therefore, Gal-3 markedly triggers proliferation and differentiation of smooth muscle cells of vasculature in tandem with aldosterone increasing expression of vascular cell adhesion molecule 1 (VCAM-1) and interleukin-12: a cytokine with pro-inflammatory and anti-angiogenic activity (Calvier, L. et al., 2016). There is evidence that both Gal-3 and aldosterone failed functional capabilities of resident cells including endothelial progenitor cells, which are a component of endogenous vascular repair system (Berezin, A.E., 2017). Moreover, number of circulating EPCs with pro-angiogenic phenotypes inversely associated with Gal-3 levels and predicts endothelial dysfunction (Berezin, A.E., 2016).

3. Galectin-3 as a Prognosticator in PAH

There was significant correlation between Gal-3 levels in PAH individuals with mean pulmonary artery pressure and right ventricular dysfunction, but this association persisted after adjustment for CV risk factors and severity of inflammation (Fenster, B.E.m et al., 2016). Although elevated Gal-3 levels were associated with a higher risk of all-cause mortality, CV mortality, and heart failure (Mazurek, J.A., et al., 2017), the role of Gal-3 in PAH patients at high risk stratification is uncertain. Indeed, authors reported that Gal-3 was a strong predictor of mortality after adjusting for age, sex, race, glomerular filtration rate, NT-proBNP, medications, and aetiology of PAH (Mazurek, J.A., et al., 2017). However, Gal-3 associates with severity of vascular remodeling in PAH and act as a critical regulator in the pathogenesis of PAH (Barman, S. A., 2018). Finally, Gal-3 may add prognostic value beyond traditional CV risk factors and it could be possible therapeutic target for individuals with PAH (Berezin, A. E., 2016).

In conclusion, elevated Gal-3 levels were found in majority patients with PAH depending on clinical status and of the disease. Estimating of prognosis, risk stratification and choosing of the most effective therapy in PAH might correspond to serial measures of Gal-3. In addition to conventional findings including NYHA functional class, hemodynamic features and risk scoring based on clinical criteria, the analysis of Gal-3 in peripheral blood can be useful to evaluate disease severity and medical care responses.

Acknowledgments

There were no grants or other financial support for the study. Author does not declare a conflict of interests.

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