NKG2D Chimeric Antigen Receptor-Expressing Lymphocytes Target Acute Myeloid Leukemia Cells

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Introduction & Objectives

Acute myeloid leukemia (AML) is a hematological malignancy with a very low overall survival. Among the new treatment modalities, chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) therapy is showing promising results in hematological malignancies. Since AML exhibits high heterogeneity and does not have specific differential antigens of the hematopoietic stem cell, using NKG2D-CAR cells could be an appropriate therapeutic strategy against AML. NKG2D receptor has a wide range of specific tumor cell ligands (MICA, MICB, ULBP-1, ULBP-2, and ULBP-3) which are expressed in more than 80% of all tumors. For this reason, the objective of this work was to evaluate the anti-tumor activity of activated and expanded natural killer cells (NKAe) and T cells expressing an NKG2D CAR.

Patients & Methods

T cells and NK cells were isolated from the healthy donor peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC) by immunomagnetic depletion. NK cells were obtained by co-culture with sublethally irradiated CSA10X2 cells. The purified NKAs and T cells were transduced with an NKG2D CAR with 4-1BB and CD3 signaling domains. The viral supernatant was produced by transient transfection of HEK293T cells with the vector genome plasmid and lentiviral packaging helper plasmids. NKAs and T cells were transduced 10 days after co-culture with CSTX002 in RPMI-1640 medium with IL-2 at 100 IU/mL and 10% AB serum. T cells were incubated in X-Vivo-15 medium with IL-2 at 250 IU/mL and anti-CD3/anti-CD28 antibodies. T cells were transduced 24 hours after activation. The efficiency of transduction was evaluated by flow cytometry detecting NKG2D expression. Also, the immunoprofiling of surface molecules, as well as the expression of NKG2D ligands and PD-1 ligands in tumor cells (AML cell lines -n=5- and primary cells -n=3-1) were analyzed by flow cytometry. The cytotoxicity of untransduced NKAe, CAR-NKAe cells, untransduced T cells and CAR-T cells was evaluated by 4 hour europium release assay. Also, cytotoxicity after 24 hour exposition was evaluated by flow cytometry of PI and annexin V-cells. Toxicity on healthy tissue (healthy lung cells -NL-20- and PBMCs from third party) was analyzed in the same way by 4 hour Eur-TDA release assay.

Conclusions

- We have demonstrated that AML cells could be target with an NKG2D-CAR.
- Primary NKAe cells and T cells can be transduced with an NKG2D-CAR at low MOI to enhance their antileukemic activity.
- NKG2D-CAR-T cells exhibited a highly activated phenotype and were more effective than CAR-NKAe cells.
- Moreover, CAR-T cells were able to near completely destroy AML blasts.
- Although further studies are needed, these results show the potential of NKG2D-CAR T and NK cell therapy in AML.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by CRIS Foundation for Cancer Research (Cancer Research Innovation Spain).

Conflict of Interest Disclosures:

DJP hold patents in the area of CAR T cell therapy. DAL declares an equity interest, advisory role, and intellectual property licensing to Cytokine Therapeutics and Kiads Pharma, and advisory role with Caribou Biosciences and Courier Biosciences.

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