

AWARD NUMBER DAMD17-98-1-8050

TITLE: Cytochrome P450-17alpha Polymorphism and Risk of Breast Cancer

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REPORT DATE: August 1999

TYPE OF REPORT: Annual

PREPARED FOR: U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command
Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT: Approved for Public Release;
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DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 3

20010109 101

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.

1. AGENCY USE ONLY <i>(Leave blank)</i>	2. REPORT DATE August 1999	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Annual (1 Aug 98 - 31 Jul 99)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Cytochrome P450-17alpha Polymorphism and Risk of Breast Cancer		5. FUNDING NUMBERS DAMD17-98-1-8050	
6. AUTHOR(S) Habibul Ahsan, M.D.		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Columbia University New York, New York 10032			
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U. S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012		10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES			
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited		12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT <i>(Maximum 200 words)</i> The current study investigates whether polymorphisms in the CYP17 gene, which plays roles in estrogen biosynthesis, are associated with an altered risk of breast cancer in a population-based sample of women (400 cases and 400 controls) who participated in the Long Island Breast Cancer Study Project (LIBSCP). In addition, we are also exploring whether the effects of reproductive risk factors and exposure to exogenous estrogen are modified by CYP17 polymorphisms. In the past year, laboratory assays on CYP17 polymorphisms are being conducted in the Division of Environmental Health Sciences of Columbia University. The polymorphisms are being determined by PCR-RFLP methods with a digestion by appropriate restriction enzymes. To date, assays on 300 cases and 300 controls have been performed. Delays in subject and sample selection in the parent LIBSCP study delayed Task 1, thus delaying the start of laboratory analyses. Therefore, Task 2 will not be completed until the end of September 1999. Entry of laboratory data to computers and merging of laboratory data with questionnaire data (Task 3) are estimated to begin in October 1999. Data analysis, manuscript preparation and report writing (Tasks 4 & 5) will take place in the coming year.			
14. SUBJECT TERMS Breast Cancer, CYP17, estrogen, epidemiology		15. NUMBER OF PAGES 6	
		16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Unlimited

FOREWORD

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Halim Ah 8/27/99
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Cytochrome P450-17alpha Polymorphism and Risk of Breast Cancer
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Introduction

Cumulative exposure of circulating estrogen to the breast is linked to the etiology of breast cancer with several studies^{1,2} suggesting that circulating estradiol (the active form of estrogen) is significantly elevated in breast cancer patients compared to controls in both high and low risk populations³⁻⁶. This variation in circulating estradiol may be due in part to genetic polymorphisms affecting the activity of the enzymes responsible for the metabolism and cellular binding of estrogen in individuals. The enzyme, whose polymorphisms have demonstrated the most potential in the etiology of breast cancer, is the cytochrome P450c17 α (CYP17) enzyme. Therefore, the current investigation is investigating whether polymorphisms of the CYP17 gene are associated with an altered risk of breast cancer in a population-based sample of women (400 controls and 400 cases) who participated in the Long Island Breast Cancer Study Project (LIBCSP). Further, we are also exploring whether the effects of reproductive risk factors (e.g., age at menarche, menopause, last child birth and parity) and exposure to exogenous estrogen like hormone replacement therapy, oral contraceptives or estrogen-mimicking substances such as organochlorine pesticides on breast cancer are modified by CYP17 polymorphisms.

Body

Subject and sample selection was delayed in the parent study (LIBCSP) and thus Task I which involved randomly selecting 400 cases and 400 controls (frequency matched to cases by five-year age groups) in batches, using code numbers from among women who had participated in the LIBCSP, was not completed until Month 4. These women provided blood samples and completed a questionnaire for the LIBCSP. Approximately 75% of study participants are postmenopausal in this randomly selected subgroup of the LIBCSP. As expected, the majority of cases and controls randomly selected for this study reflected the racial make-up of the LIBCSP population which is 90% Caucasian, 7% Black and 3% other races.

All laboratory analyses are being done in the laboratory of Dr. Regina Santella in the Division of Environmental Health Sciences of Columbia University. Genomic DNA was isolated from all cases and controls using standard phenol/chloroform extraction method. Polymorphism in the CYP17 gene is being determined by PCR-RFLP methods with the use of appropriate restriction enzymes. Briefly, genomic DNA was amplified by PCR using CYP17-specific primers. Following PCR amplification, digestion of amplified DNA was accomplished by Msp1A1 restriction enzyme. Restriction Fragment Length Polymorphism (RFLP) patterns are being examined by agarose gel electrophoresis after staining with ethidium bromide to detect CYP17 A1 and A2 alleles. The polymorphisms are being identified as follows: 1) a base change in both alleles (A2/A2 genotype) identified if two bands of DNA on the gel are generated, 2) heterozygous (A1/A2) individuals are identified as having three bands on the gel since the enzyme cuts only the mutated allele and not the wild type allele, and 3) individuals who are homzygous (A1/A1) for the alleles produce one band of the uncut PCR product on gel. CYP17 assays completed to date were performed and interpreted blinded to subject characteristics and case-control status. To date these laboratory assays have been performed on only 300 cases and 300 controls as a result of the delay in beginning Task I, as previously mentioned. However, laboratory assays for the remaining cases and controls are expected to be completed by the end of September 1999. Task 3, which includes entry of laboratory data to computers and merging of laboratory data with questionnaire data will be completed in October/November 1999.

Data analysis (Task 4) as well as manuscript preparation and report writing (Task 5) will commence in the coming year.

Key Research Accomplishments

Not applicable at this time.

Reportable Outcomes

Not applicable at this time.

Conclusions

Not applicable at this time.

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