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AWARD NUMBER: W81XWH-05-1-0262

TITLE: Role of CDK4 in Breast Development and Cancer

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REPORT DATE: April 2006

TYPE OF REPORT: Annual Summary

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

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) April 2006		2. REPORT TYPE Annual Summary		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) 10 Mar 05 – 9 Mar 06	
Role of CDK4 in Breast Development and Cancer				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER W81XWH-05-1-0262	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Haritha Reddy E-mail: harithad@temple.edu				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Temple University Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19122-6024				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Cdk4 is an important regulator of G1/S cell cycle progression in mammalian cells. In about 15.8% (15 out of 95) of breast cancers, cdk4 gene was shown to be amplified and this amplification of cdk4 gene was correlated with high Cdk4 protein expression. Our studies with the breast tissues of cdk4 (neo/neo) mice revealed the presence of small fat pads and poor ductal branching when compared to that of wild type mice. In order to determine the importance of cdk4 in Wnt- and Neu-induced breast tumorigenesis, we generated cdk4 (neo/neo): MMTV- transgenic lines that express Wnt and Neu in breast specific manner. Our results from these studies indicated that there is impaired lobuloalveolar compartment development and poor ductal branching in case of cdk4 (neo/neo): MMTV-neu mice when compared to cdk4 (+/+): MMTV-neu mice. In contrast, the mammary gland development in case of both Wnt transgenic mice, cdk4 (+/+): MMTV-Wnt and cdk4 (neo/neo): MMTV-Wnt, is comparable. Further studies revealed that there is resistance to neu-induced breast tumorigenesis in case of cdk4 (neo/neo): MMTV-neu mice when compared to cdk4 (+/+): MMTV-neu mice. In contrast, in case of Wnt transgenic mice, the tumorigenesis studies revealed that both cdk4 (+/+): MMTV-Wnt and cdk4 (neo/neo): MMTV-Wnt mice are equally susceptible to breast cancer induced by Wnt. This indicates that cdk4 is essential for neu-induced tumorigenesis and not for Wnt-induced tumorigenesis.					
15. Subject Terms (keywords previously assigned to proposal abstract or terms which apply to this award) CDK4, Breast Development, Oncogenes, Cell Cycle					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
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Table of Contents

Cover.....	1
SF 298.....	2
Introduction.....	4
Body.....	4
Key Research Accomplishments.....	5
Reportable Outcomes.....	5
Conclusions.....	5
References.....	5
Appendices.....	6

Introduction:

Breast cancer is the most malignant cancer among women. In about 20% of human breast cancers, the *cyclin D1* gene was found to be amplified and overexpression of the Cyclin D1 protein was observed in about 50% of human breast cancers (1). These D type cyclins associate with CDK4, an important regulator of G1/S cell cycle progression of mammalian cells in culture. In about 15.8% (15 out of 95) of breast cancers, *cdk4* gene was shown to be amplified and this amplification of *cdk4* gene was correlated with high CDK4 protein expression (2). The histopathological analysis of breast tissue from *cdk4 neo/neo* mice revealed the presence of small fat pads and poor ductal branching when compared to that of wild type mice. This is in contrast to *cyclin D1 (-/-)* mice in which mammary gland development is comparable to wild type mice but show impairment of lobuloalveolar development during the late stages of pregnancy. These *cyclin D1 (-/-)* mice were resistant to mammary cancer driven by *neu* and *ras* protooncogenes but susceptible to those driven by *Wnt* and *myc* protooncogenes (1). It is not known if Cdk4 is required for these oncogenes to induce mammary tumors. In order to delineate the mechanisms associated with mammary tumor induction by these oncogenes, it is important to know if Cdk4 is required for the tumor induction by these oncogenes.

Body:

cdk4/ MMTV-*neu* and *cdk4/* MMTV-*Wnt* transgenic mice:

We crossed *cdk4 (+/neo)* mice to MMTV-*neu* and MMTV-*Wnt* transgenic mice and generated *cdk4 (+/+)*: MMTV-*neu*, *cdk4 (neo/neo)*: MMTV-*neu*, *cdk4 (+/+)*: MMTV-*Wnt* and *cdk4 (neo/neo)*: MMTV-*Wnt* transgenic mice. With these mice we carried out histopathological analysis, tumor frequency studies and cell cycle protein analysis.

The histopathological studies of *cdk4 (+/+)*: MMTV-*neu* mice revealed the presence of proliferative disturbances in the mammary epithelium as evidenced by the appearance of hyperneoplastic nodules. In contrast to this, *cdk4 (neo/neo)*: MMTV-*neu* mice showed poor ductal branching and less lobuloalveolar development when compared to that of the wild type counterparts. Whereas in case of both *cdk4 (+/+)*: MMTV-*Wnt* and *cdk4 (neo/neo)*: MMTV-*Wnt* transgenic mice, the histopathological analysis of mammary glands showed robust development of lobuloalveolar compartment which is comparable to that of *cdk4+/+* pregnant females.

The tumor frequency studies revealed the development of breast cancer in about ~97% of *cdk4 (+/+)*: MMTV-*neu* females at an age on 28 to 75 weeks, which is in contrast to *cdk4 (neo/neo)*: MMTV-*neu* females. In case of *cdk4 (neo/neo)*: MMTV-*neu* females, only 14% developed breast cancer by 60 weeks of age. Whereas in case of *Wnt* transgenic mice, >90% of mice developed breast cancer by 30 weeks of age.

The analysis of cell cycle proteins CDK6 and CDK2 showed that their expression is similar in the mammary tissues of all these transgenic mice.

The only technical difficulty encountered was regarding the standardization of kinase assays. We performed kinase assays to determine the activity of different cyclin dependent kinases and found nonspecific activity in these assays. Presently, we are trying to solve this problem using different methods.

cdk4/ MMTV-*H-ras* and *cdk4*/ MMTV-*c-myc* transgenic mice:

We are crossing *cdk4*^{+/-} mice to MMTV-*ras* and MMTV-*Wnt* mice to generate statistically significant numbers for the tumorigenesis studies.

Key Research Accomplishments:

- Impaired mammary gland development in *cdk4* (*neo/neo*): MMTV-*neu* mice when compared to wild type counterparts
- Resistance to mammary tumors induced by *neu* oncogene in case of *cdk4* (*neo/neo*): MMTV-*neu* mice when compared to wild type counterparts
- Robust development of mammary glands in case of *Wnt* transgenic mice irrespective of the presence or absence of *cdk4*
- Equal susceptibility of *Wnt* transgenic mice to mammary tumors irrespective of the presence or absence of *cdk4*

Reportable Outcomes:

Cyclin-Dependent Kinase 4 Expression is Essential for Neu Induced Breast Tumorigenesis

Haritha K.D.L. Reddy, Richard V. Mettus, Sushil G. Rane, Xavier Grana, Judith Litvin, and E. Premkumar Reddy

Cancer Res 2005; 65: (22). November 15, 2005

Conclusion:

Our results indicate that *cdk4* is essential for *neu*-induced tumorigenesis and not for *Wnt* induced tumorigenesis. The presence of significantly similar levels of Cdk6 and Cdk2 shows that the loss of Cdk4 is not compensated by either Cdk6 or Cdk2.

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Cyclin-Dependent Kinase 4 Expression Is Essential for Neu-Induced Breast Tumorigenesis

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Abstract

Previous work has shown that cyclin D1 expression is required for *neu*- and *ras*-induced, but not *wnt*- or *c-myc*-induced, breast tumorigenesis in mice. Although cyclin D1 binds and activates cyclin-dependent kinase 4 (Cdk4), thereby mediating activation of a program of E2F-dependent gene expression, it has been suggested that the oncogenic activities of cyclin D1 are independent of Cdk4. To determine whether Cdk4 expression is required for breast tumorigenesis in mice, we have generated compound mice ectopically expressing the *neu* or *wnt* oncogenes in the mammary glands of wild-type and *Cdk4*^{-/-} mice. Our results show that Cdk4 expression is required for efficient *neu*-induced tumorigenesis but is dispensable for *wnt*-induced breast tumorigenesis. In contrast to results previously observed in the mammary glands of *cyclin D1*^{-/-} virgin females, our results show defects in mammary gland development in *Cdk4*^{-/-} virgin females, suggesting differences in compensatory mechanisms in the absence of either subunit of the cyclin D1/Cdk4 complex. These results suggest that drugs targeted to inhibit Cdk4 activities could be developed to specifically treat certain breast tumors as Cdk4 is not essential for viability. (Cancer Res 2005; 65(22): 10174-8)

Introduction

A key response to growth factors in many cell types is the activation of cyclin-dependent kinase (Cdk) 4 or Cdk6 by members of the cyclin D family (D1, D2, and D3). D-type cyclins are expressed at low levels in a variety of quiescent cell types and their expression is stimulated by growth factors and mitogens (1–5). Approximately 50% of human mammary carcinomas express abnormally high levels of cyclin D1 (6–10), which is maintained throughout subsequent stages of breast cancer progression from *in situ* carcinoma to invasive carcinomas (9, 11, 12). Consistent with the oncogenic role of cyclin D1 in mammary epithelium, transgenic mice overexpressing cyclin D1 in their breast tissue have been found to develop mammary adenocarcinomas (13). Furthermore, loss of cyclin D1 was found to affect breast development (14, 15). More importantly, cyclin D1 null mutant mice were found to be resistant to breast cancers induced by the *neu* and *ras* oncogenes but remained fully sensitive to other oncogenic pathways driven by c-Myc or Wnt-1 (16). A requirement for D-type cyclins in cellular transformation

in vitro has also been shown using triple *cyclin D* knockout mouse embryonic fibroblasts, which are resistant to transformation by c-Myc or Ras in combination with dn-p53, E1A, or c-Myc (17). Similarly, *Cdk4* null mouse embryonic fibroblasts have been shown to be refractory to transformation by Ras and dn-p53 and, consistent with these data, the hyperactive *Cdk4R24C* allele cooperates with single oncogenes to transform mouse embryonic fibroblasts *in vitro* (18, 19). Taken together, these results suggest that the activity of D-type cyclin/Cdk4 complexes is required for fibroblast transformation. However, it has also been suggested that the oncogenic function of cyclin D1 is independent of its ability to activate Cdks and is perhaps linked to the direct effects of cyclin D1 in controlling the expression of a subset of genes that are co-up-regulated in human tumors with deregulated cyclin D1 (20).

Thus, whereas a role for cyclin D1 in breast cancer is well established, it is not known whether the oncogenic function of cyclin D1 requires Cdk4. To understand the role of Cdk4 *in vivo*, we have targeted the mouse *Cdk4* locus by homologous recombination in embryonic stem cells and generated a strain of mice that does not express *Cdk4* [*Cdk4(neo/neo)*; ref. 21]. Homozygous *Cdk4(neo/neo)* null mutant mice are viable and were found to be very resistant to carcinogen-induced cancers (data not shown). In this communication, we show that loss of *Cdk4* expression results in poor mammary gland development that is characterized by impaired ductal branching. In addition, we show that Cdk4 expression is essential for *neu*-induced breast tumor development; on the other hand, it is dispensable for *wnt*-induced breast tumor development.

Materials and Methods

Generation of *Cdk4(neo/neo)*/mouse mammary tumor virus transgenic mice. To generate compound mice that express *neu* and *wnt-1* oncogenes in a Cdk4 null background, *Cdk4(neo/+)* mice were mated with mouse mammary tumor virus (MMTV)-*neu* and MMTV-*wnt-1* transgenic mice to generate *Cdk4(neo/+)*/MMTV-*neu* and *Cdk4(neo/+)*/MMTV-*wnt-1* mice, respectively. These mice were then intracrossed to generate *Cdk4(neo/neo)*/MMTV-*neu* and *Cdk4(neo/neo)*/MMTV-*wnt-1* transgenic mice.

Whole-mount and histopathologic analysis of mammary glands. The fourth inguinal mammary glands were dissected, spread onto a glass slide, and fixed with a mixture (1:3) of glacial acetic acid/ethanol, hydrated, stained with 0.2% carmine and 0.5% AlK(SO₄)₂, dehydrated in graded solutions of ethanol, and cleared in toluene and methyl salicylate as described previously (14). Carmine-stained or formalin-fixed mammary glands were also routinely processed for paraffin embedding and were stained with H&E.

Protein analysis. Mammary glands or tumors were homogenized in TNE lysis buffer and lysates were cleared by centrifugation. Protein, 50 to 100 µg, was resolved by SDS-PAGE and was transferred to nitrocellulose membranes. Immunoblots were probed with antibodies against HER2/ErbB2 (Cell Signaling Technology, Beverly, MA), Cdk4 (Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Inc., Santa Cruz, CA), Cdk6 (NeoMarkers, Fremont, CA), Cdk2 (Santa Cruz Biotechnology), glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH, Abcam, Cambridge, MA), retinoblastoma (Rb; BD Biosciences, San Diego, CA), and phosphorylated Rb (pRb; Ser⁷⁸⁰; Cell Signaling Technology).

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doi:10.1158/0008-5472.CAN-05-2639

Results

Cdk4 is required for proper development of mammary epithelium. To gain an insight into the role of Cdk4 in breast development, we first examined the status of mammary epithelium in wild-type [*Cdk4*(+/+)] and *Cdk4*-deficient [*Cdk4*(*neo/neo*)] mice. Examination of H&E-stained mammary gland whole mounts derived from virgin female mammary glands at 14 to 17 weeks revealed striking differences in the extent of mammary gland ductal outgrowth in the two sets of mice (Fig. 1A and C). In *Cdk4*(*neo/neo*) mice, both ductal outgrowth and branching morphogenesis was considerably reduced when compared with their wild-type counterparts. In addition, an examination of the longitudinal sections of the mammary tissue sections also showed a distinctive reduction in the number of mammary ducts and a complete absence of alveoli (Fig. 1B and D). These observations suggest that loss of Cdk4 expression in breast epithelium results in a diminution of mammary gland ductal branching where alveolar segments were markedly fewer in number compared with the wild-type mammary gland.

Effect of loss of Cdk4 expression on *neu*- and *wnt*-mediated breast tumorigenesis. To study the role of Cdk4 in *neu*- and *wnt*-induced breast tumorigenesis, *Cdk4*(*neo/neo*) mice were bred with MMTV-*neu* and MMTV-*wnt* transgenic mice to generate *Cdk4*(*neo/neo*):MMTV-*neu*, and *Cdk4*(*neo/neo*):MMTV-*wnt* mice, respectively (Fig. 2A). Whole-mount and histopathologic sections of the mammary glands derived from virgin adult mice (~14 weeks) from these different crosses (Fig. 2B and F) showed that *Cdk4*(+/+):MMTV-*neu* mice exhibit proliferative disturbances in the mammary epithelium as evidenced by the appearance of multiple hyperplastic and dysplastic nodules that infiltrate the mammary fat pad (Fig. 2B and F), which is in accordance with the published data (22). Similar examination of whole-mount and histopathologic sections of mammary tissue derived from *Cdk4*(*neo/neo*):MMTV-*neu* mice showed that the ductal outgrowth and branching morphogenesis was considerably reduced compared with *Cdk4*(+/+):MMTV-*neu*

mice with distinctive absence of any hyperplastic or dysplastic nodules that are characteristic of the latter group of mice (Fig. 2C and G). Histopathologic examination of these mammary glands also failed to show abnormal proliferative disturbances in the mammary epithelium of *Cdk4*(*neo/neo*):MMTV-*neu* mice (Fig. 2C and G). This does not seem to be due to lack of Neu expression, as equal levels of Neu protein was seen in both *Cdk4*(+/+):MMTV-*neu* and *Cdk4*(*neo/neo*):MMTV-*neu* mice (Fig. 2J). These results suggest that Cdk4 expression is essential for the appearance of MMTV-*neu*-induced proliferative disturbances that are seen in *Cdk4*(+/+):MMTV-*neu* mice.

In contrast to MMTV-*neu* mice, the mammary glands of virgin *Cdk4*(+/+):MMTV-*wnt* mice showed precocious lobuloalveolar development that resembles that of *Cdk4*(+/+) pregnant female mice (Fig. 2D and H), similar to previously reported observations (23). Histopathologic examination of these mammary glands revealed extensive appearance of hyperplastic alveolar nodules, which seem to be preneoplastic lesions (23). Similar examination of whole-mount and histopathologic sections of mammary tissue derived from *Cdk4*(*neo/neo*):MMTV-*wnt* mice showed that the ductal outgrowth and branching morphogenesis was unaltered compared with *Cdk4*(+/+):MMTV-*wnt* mice (Fig. 2E and I). Histopathologic examination of these mammary tissues again showed extensive appearance of hyperplastic alveolar nodules, similar to that seen with wild-type MMTV-*wnt* mice. These results indicate that MMTV-*wnt*-induced proliferative disturbances do not require Cdk4 expression.

Loss of expression of Cdk4 influences the incidence of mammary carcinomas. It has been previously reported that MMTV-*neu*-induced breast carcinomas require the expression of cyclin D1, whereas those induced by MMTV-*wnt* do not require the expression of cyclin D1 (16). To determine whether Cdk4 plays a similar role in the development of breast carcinomas, we monitored the four groups of transgenic mice for the appearance of breast tumors. The results of this study presented in Fig. 3A show that ~97% of the *Cdk4*(+/+):MMTV-*neu* mice develop breast cancer between 28 to 75 weeks of age. The rest of the mice were found to develop salivary gland tumors. In sharp contrast, only ~14% of the *Cdk4*(*neo/neo*):MMTV-*neu* mice develop signs of breast cancer and this incidence was found to occur only after ~60 weeks of age; when these tumors arise, they were very small in size compared with their wild-type counterparts. Calculation of *P* values showed a highly significant increase in tumor frequency ($P = 2.3 \times 10^{-6}$) for *Cdk4*(+/+):MMTV-*neu* mice as opposed to their *neo/neo* counterparts. These observations suggest that development of breast tumors in MMTV-*neu* transgenic mice requires normal expression of Cdk4.

In contrast to *Cdk4*(+/+):MMTV-*neu* mice, both *Cdk4*(+/+):MMTV-*wnt* mice and *Cdk4*(*neo/neo*):MMTV-*wnt* mice exhibited a rapid onset of breast tumors around 10 weeks of age and >90% of these mice developed breast tumors by the age of 30 weeks (Fig. 3B). Our studies also show that there was a slight delay in the development of breast tumors in *Cdk4*(*neo/neo*):MMTV-*wnt* mice compared with their wild-type counterparts. In contrast to the results observed for MMTV-*neu* mice, no significant difference in tumor frequency ($P = 0.7264$) was observed between *Cdk4*(+/+):MMTV-*wnt* and their *neo/neo* counterparts. The incidence of breast tumors was seen in both male and female mice as has been previously described (22). These observations show that Cdk4 expression is dispensable for MMTV-*wnt*-induced breast tumorigenesis.

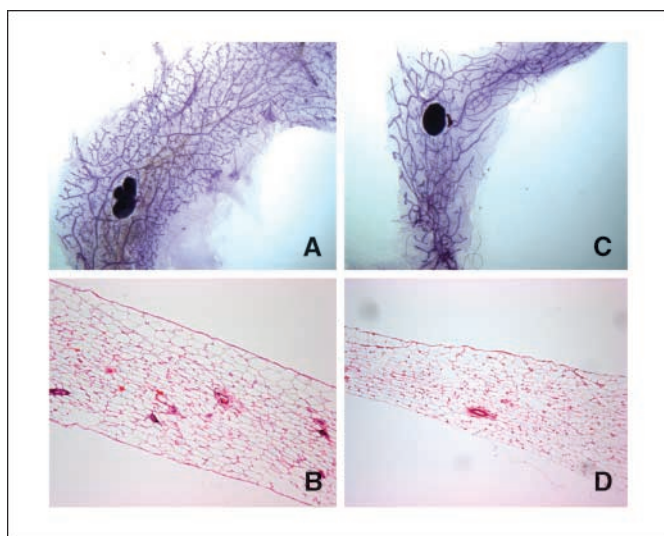


Figure 1. Impaired mammary epithelial expansion in *Cdk4*(*neo/neo*) mice. The fourth inguinal mammary glands from *Cdk4*(+/+) (A) and *Cdk4*(*neo/neo*) (C) mice at 14 weeks of age were removed, fixed, and stained with carmine alum stain overnight at room temperature. Histologic sections of the fourth inguinal mammary glands from *Cdk4*(+/+) mice (B) and *Cdk4*(*neo/neo*) mice (D) were stained with H&E.

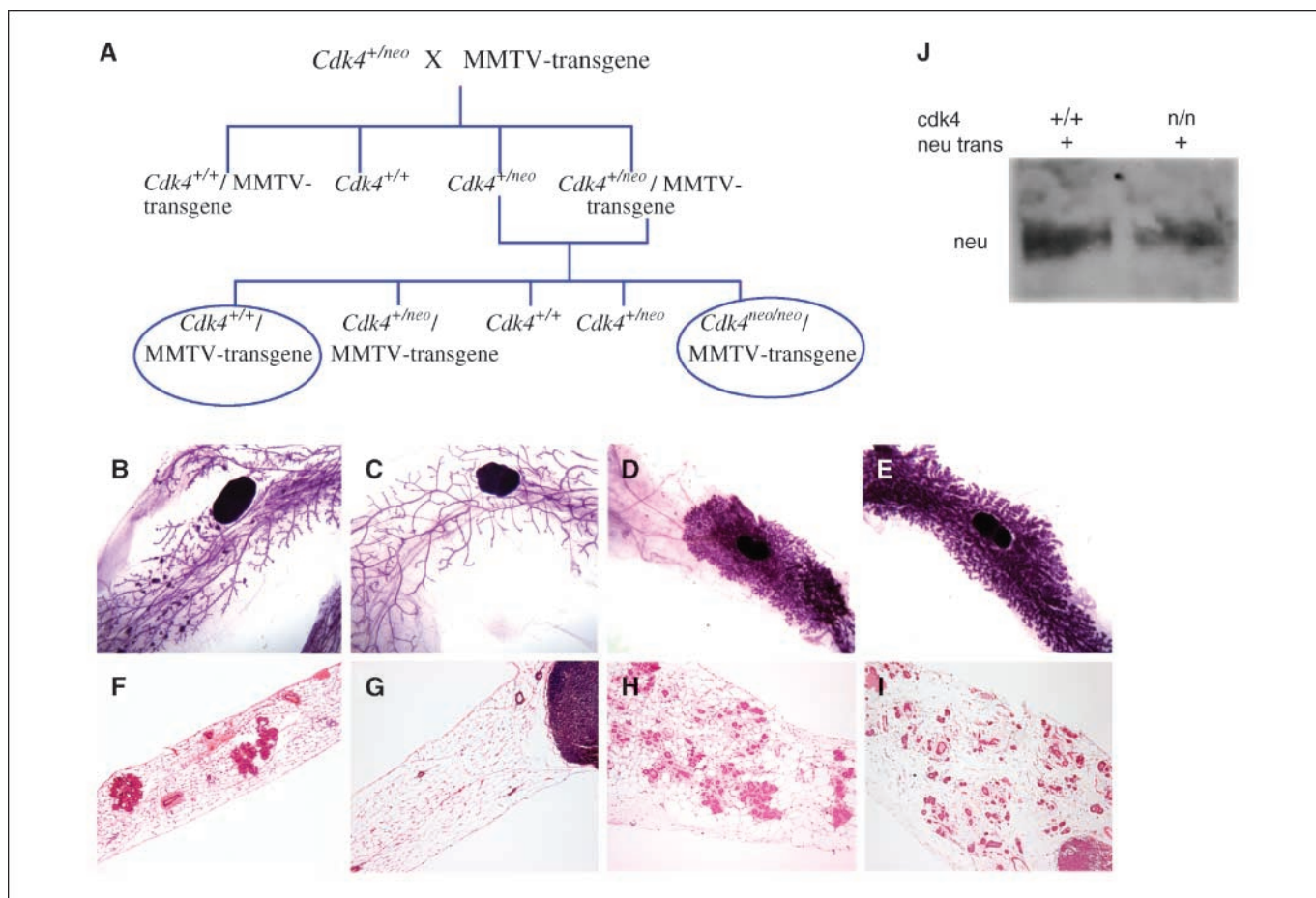


Figure 2. Loss of Cdk4 impairs MMTV-neu-induced breast epithelial cell proliferation and formation of preneoplastic nodules but not of the MMTV-wnt-1-induced transformation. **A**, crosses done to produce the required transgenic mice. Whole mounts were made from the fourth inguinal mammary glands of $Cdk4^{+/+}$ /MMTV-neu (**B**), $Cdk4^{neo/neo}$ /MMTV-neu (**C**), $Cdk4^{+/+}$ /MMTV-wnt-1 (**D**), and $Cdk4^{neo/neo}$ /MMTV-wnt-1 (**E**) transgenic mice. **F**, **G**, **H**, and **I**, H&E-stained sections of the mammary glands shown in **B**, **C**, **D**, and **E** respectively. **J**, Western blot analysis of mammary tissue extracts derived from $Cdk4^{neo/neo}$ and $Cdk4^{+/+}$ mice. Each lane contains 100 μ g of protein. Western blot analysis was done with an anti-neu antibody.

The histopathologic sections of the tumors is given in Fig. 3C. These sections show that $Cdk4^{+/+}$:MMTV-neu tumors have a high density of epithelial cells, whereas the tumor sections of $Cdk4^{neo/neo}$:MMTV-neu mice show increased infiltration by connective tissue. MMTV-wnt tumors in a $Cdk4^{+/+}$ or $Cdk4^{neo/neo}$ background showed a similar phenotype with a high density of epithelial cells. Interestingly, these tumors show increased vasculature, suggesting that the Wnt pathway promotes angiogenesis, which might explain the very rapid growth of tumors in these mice.

Expression patterns of Cdk4, Cdk6, and Cdk2. It has been previously shown that loss of *cyclin D1* results in a breast tumor phenotype similar to that described here for $Cdk4^{neo/neo}$ mice. In the case of MMTV-wnt:cyclin D-/- mice, loss of *cyclin D1* seemed to be compensated by the overexpression of cyclin D2, which could drive the cell cycle progression (16). To understand the molecular basis for the development of breast tumors in MMTV-wnt mice in a $Cdk4$ null background, we examined the expression patterns and kinase activities of Cdk6 and Cdk2 in all four of the genotypes studied here. The results presented in Fig. 4A show that in both $Cdk4^{neo/neo}$:MMTV-wnt and in $Cdk4^{neo/neo}$:MMTV-neu mice, the levels of Cdk4 were undetectable, whereas the levels of Cdk4 were pronounced in $Cdk4^{+/+}$:MMTV-neu and $Cdk4^{+/+}$:MMTV-wnt mice. In contrast, the levels of Cdk6 and Cdk2 were

approximately equal in all four genotypes. These results suggest that neither Cdk6 nor Cdk2 compensate for the loss of Cdk4 in MMTV-wnt transgenic mice on a $Cdk4^{neo/neo}$ background. We next examined the expression levels and the phosphorylation status of Rb in $Cdk4^{neo/neo}$, $Cdk4^{+/+}$ as well as the MMTV-neu and MMTV-wnt transgenic mice crossed to the two Cdk4 backgrounds. Results of these experiments presented in Fig. 4B show that the level of pRb Ser⁷⁸⁰ phosphorylation was low in $Cdk4^{+/+}$ tissues but showed considerable elevation in those derived from both $Cdk4^{+/+}$:MMTV-neu and $Cdk4^{+/+}$:MMTV-wnt mice, which corresponds to the high levels of Cdk4, Cdk6, and Cdk2 activities seen in these tissues.

Discussion

Our studies reported in this article suggest the importance of *Cdk4* in mammary gland development and tumorigenesis. Whole-mount analysis and histologic sections of $Cdk4^{neo/neo}$ and $Cdk4^{+/+}$ mice show that Cdk4 is required for proper ductal branching and lobuloalveolar development of virgin female mice. In contrast, the mammary glands of *cyclin D1*-/- virgin females have been reported to be identical to that of wild-type mice. This difference is likely due to the compensation by cyclins D2 and D3,

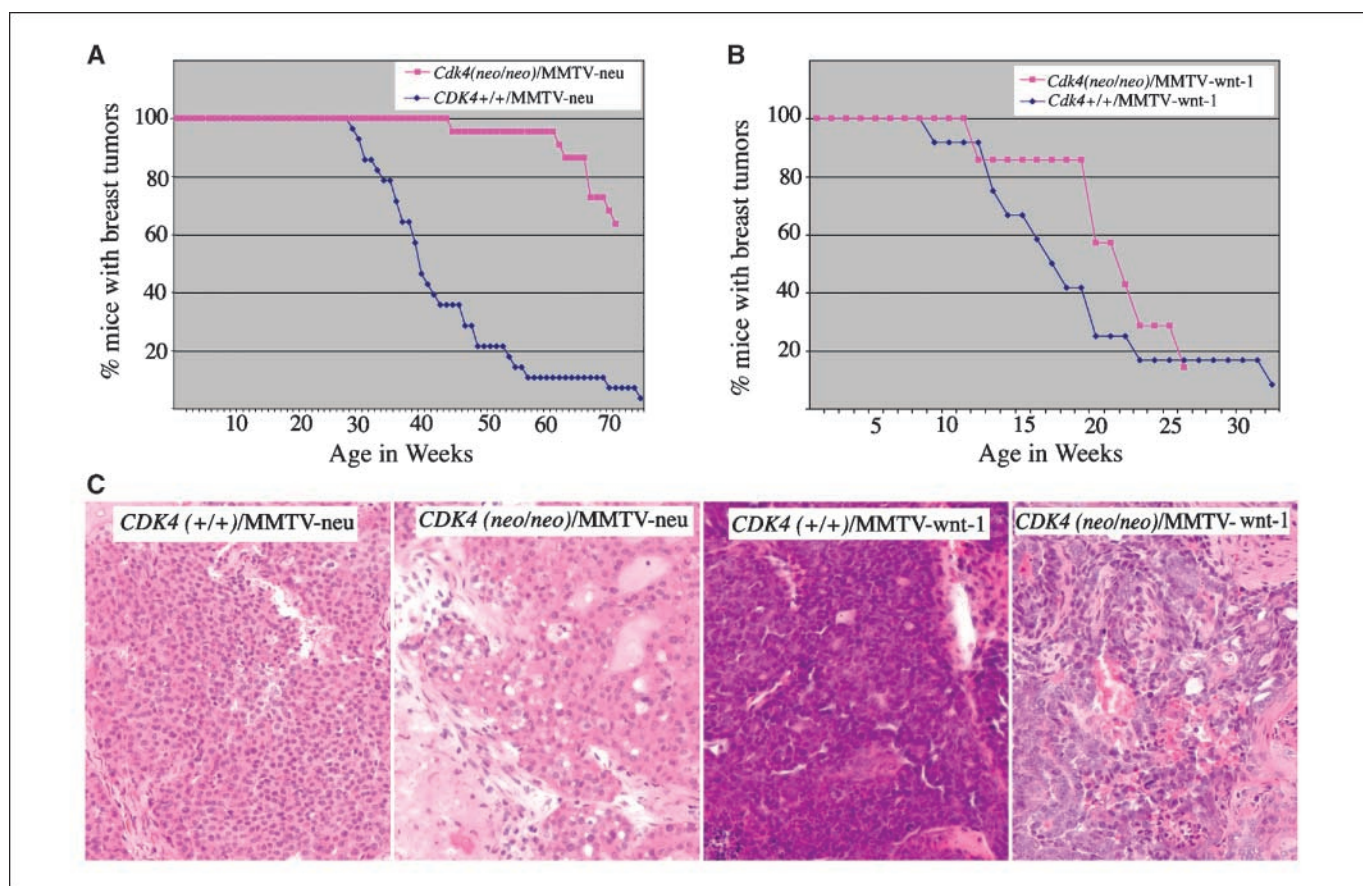


Figure 3. Loss of *Cdk4* results in reduced and delayed tumor incidence in *Cdk4(neo/neo)/MMTV-neu* transgenic mice. **A**, tumor incidence in *Cdk4(neo/neo)/MMTV-neu* and *Cdk4(+/+)/MMTV-neu* mice over a period of 75 weeks. **B**, tumor incidence in *Cdk4(neo/neo)/MMTV-wnt-1* and *Cdk4(+/+)/MMTV-wnt-1* mice over a period of 31 weeks. **C**, histology of tumors in MMTV-*neu* and MMTV-*wnt* mice bred against *Cdk4(+/+)* or *Cdk4(neo/neo)* background. Tumor sections were stained with H&E and photographed at a magnification of $\times 100$.

which are slightly up-regulated in the mammary gland of *cyclin D1*^{-/-} virgin females (16). Our results suggest that in the absence of *Cdk4*, there is no parallel compensation by other Cdks (Fig. 4, see below). Regardless of the lack of defects in the mammary gland of *cyclin D1*^{-/-} virgin females, it has been shown that *cyclin D1*^{-/-} mice fail to undergo full lobuloalveolar development during late stages of pregnancy (14, 15). It has also been shown that the *cyclin D1* null mice are prone to transformation induced by the *wnt-1* and *myc* oncogenes, but not to transformation induced by the *neu* and *ras* oncogenes (16). Recent studies on MMTV-*erbB2*-MMTV-*p16* double-transgenic mice showed that *erbB2*-mediated tumorigenesis is blocked by *p16* and that these double-transgenic mice develop rare tumors after a long delay (24). Because *Cdk4(neo/neo):MMTV-neu* mice showed decreased levels of ductal branching and lobuloalveolar development of the mammary glands when compared with that of *Cdk4(+/+):MMTV-neu* transgenic mice, we presume that *Cdk4* is required for Neu-induced proliferative events that lead to ductal branching, lobuloalveolar development, and the development of hyperneoplastic alveolar nodules, and ultimately for the development of mammary tumors. We cannot rule out, however, that the observed defects in *Cdk4(neo/neo)* mammary gland development be the indirect result of hormonal signaling deficiencies as opposed to an epithelial cell autonomous defect.

The mammary glands of *Wnt-1* transgenic virgin mice undergo precocious lobuloalveolar development and resemble the mam-

mary glands of wild-type nontransgenic pregnant females. Our whole-mount and histologic studies of the mammary glands of *Cdk4(neo/neo):MMTV-wnt-1* and *Cdk4(+/+):MMTV-wnt-1* mice showed comparable lobuloalveolar development. This suggests that *Cdk4* is not required for *Wnt-1*-induced ductal branching and lobuloalveolar development. The tumorigenesis studies conducted by us also show that both strains of mice are equally susceptible to *Wnt-1*-induced tumorigenesis, suggesting that *Cdk4* is not required for this process. Thus, if the defect in mammary development observed in *Cdk4 neo/neo* females is not cell autonomous, then *Wnt* not only bypasses *Cdk4* function, but also any conceivable defects in hormone signaling resulting from *Cdk4* ablation. Our data also showed that the level of pRb phosphorylation on Ser⁷⁸⁰ correlated with G₁ Cdk activities. We have also seen that phosphorylation of this site on pRb is highly increased in breast tumor tissues independently of *Cdk4* phosphorylation status, suggesting that in highly proliferative tumors, this site could be phosphorylated by Cdks other than *Cdk4* (data not shown).

Considering previous results indicating that Neu may act by inducing cyclin D1 expression and our results shown here that *Cdk4* is required for *neu*-induced tumorigenesis, we propose that the cyclin D1/*Cdk4* complex is required for *neu*-induced tumorigenesis. It has also been suggested that *wnt*- and *c-myc*-induced breast tumorigenesis communicate with the cell cycle machinery in breast epithelial cells through different targets. In this regard,

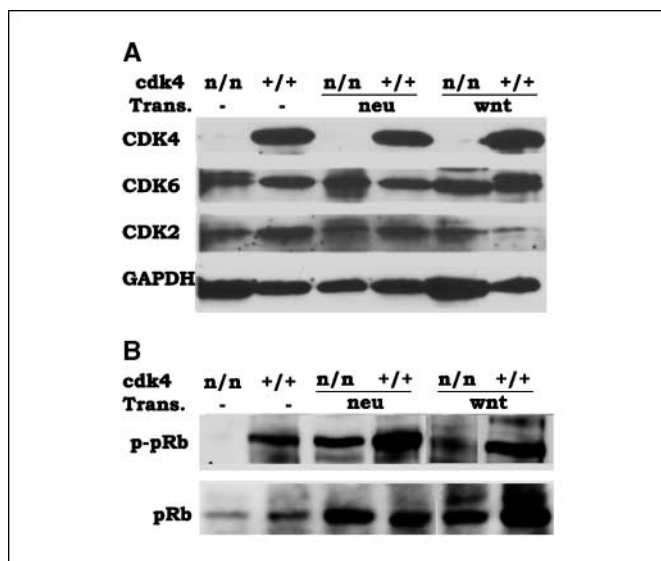


Figure 4. Cdk4, Cdk6, and Cdk2 expression and activity. **A**, Western blot analysis of the protein extracted from frozen mammary tissues of *Cdk4(neo/neo)*, *Cdk4(+/+)*, *Cdk4(neo/neo)/MMTV-neu*, *Cdk4(+/+)/MMTV-neu*, *Cdk4(neo/neo)/MMTV-wnt-1*, and *Cdk4(+/+)/MMTV-wnt-1* transgenic mice using antibodies against Cdk4, Cdk6, Cdk2, and GAPDH (loading control). Each lane contains 50 μ g of protein. **B**, expression of unphosphorylated Rb (*pRb*) and phosphorylated Rb (*p-pRb*) in mouse mammary extracts derived from (**A**). Each lane contains 50 μ g of protein. *n/n*, *neo/neo*.

cyclin D2 expression was found to be up-regulated in tumors induced by *wnt-1* and *c-myc*, but not *neu* or *ras* (16). Considering our data showing that Cdk4 is also dispensable for *Wnt*-induced tumorigenesis, and the lack of obvious compensation by other G_1 Cdks, it is tempting to speculate that Wnt signals downstream of D-type cyclin/Cdk4 complexes. In summary, our data suggest that, at least in the case of *Neu*-induced tumorigenesis, a Cdk4 function is required. This requirement could be for Cdk4 kinase activity, or, alternatively, for the ability of the cyclin D/Cdk4 complex to sequester p27. Further studies are necessary to differentiate between these two possibilities.

These results also have important implications with respect to therapeutic modalities that might be effective in the treatment of breast cancers that are *neu*-positive. The importance of Cdk4 and cyclin D1 complex in the genesis of *Neu*-induced breast tumors suggests that small molecule inhibitors of Cdk4 kinase activity could be very effective in blocking the growth of these human breast tumors, which often represent the most aggressive forms of human breast cancer.

Acknowledgments

Received 8/1/2005; revised 9/13/2005; accepted 9/21/2005.

Grant support: NIH P01 CA95569 and R01 AG22022.

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