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Award Number: W81XWH-12-1-0503

TITLE: Tuft Cell Regulation of miRNAs in Pancreatic Cancer

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Courtney W. Houchen

CONTRACTING ORGANIZATION: The University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
Oklahoma City, OK 73104

REPORT DATE: October 2013

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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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE October 2013		2. REPORT TYPE Annual		3. DATES COVERED 30 September 2012 - 29 September 2013	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Tuft Cell Regulation of miRNAs in Pancreatic Cancer				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER W81XWH-12-1-0503	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Courtney W. Houchen E-Mail: courtney-houchen@ouhsc.edu				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) The University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center Oklahoma City, OK 73104				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 To better understand the role of tuft cells in the pancreas and to define their effects on the pancreatic body as well as the initiation of pancreatic cancer. Tuft cells are present in the hollow organs of the digestive and respiratory tracts. They are characterized by long and blunt microvilli with prominent rootlets and by a well-developed tubulovesicular system in the supranuclear cytoplasm. Recent reports suggest that tuft cells may act as mechanoreceptors and are involved in chemosensing of the microenvironment. With the successful deletion of Dclk1 throughout the pancreatic ducts, we can begin characterization, which extends our understanding of the role tuft cells play within ducts and their broader effects on the overall pancreatic microenvironment. With the initial phase ductal specific KRAS-mutation now finished, we will soon be able to examine the role of ductal cells play in the initiation of neoplastic changes (via PDX-1-Cre). Then once completed in year two, the <i>Pdx-1-Cre;Dclk1^{flox/flox};KRAS^{LSL-G12D}</i> , which removes Dclk1 expression from tuft cells and possibly the tuft cells as a whole, will dramatically extend the knowledgebase for the role of tuft cells in pancreatic neoplasia. These finding could very well provide the basis for the development of novel chemotherapeutic drugs targeting these specialized cells.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS None provided.					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 7	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON USAMRMC
a. REPORT U	b. ABSTRACT U	c. THIS PAGE U			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

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INTRODUCTION: To better understand the role of tuft cells in the pancreas and to define their effects on the pancreatic body as well as the initiation of pancreatic cancer. Tuft cells are present in the hollow organs of the digestive and respiratory tracts. They are characterized by long and blunt microvilli with prominent rootlets and by a well-developed tubulovesicular system in the supranuclear cytoplasm. Recent reports suggest that tuft cells may act as mechanoreceptors and are involved in chemosensing of the microenvironment.

BODY:

Aim/Task 1: To characterize tuft cell expression in the mouse pancreas. (1 – 12 months)

Tasks 1a and b: The initial breeding for the generation of the proposed $p48^{cre};KRAS^{G12D}$ mouse model proved problematic and the rate of genotypically desirable offspring was not consistent with expected and proposed results. The animal numbers needed would not be reached at an appropriate time for the completion of proposed work. Therefore we sought to replace the current $p48^{cre}$ breeding stock. Around and about 5/2013 email contact with Jackson Labs revealed the following “Re: Under Development - Now Accepting Orders for Strain: B6.129S6(Cg)-*Ptf1a*^{tm2(cre/ESR1)Cvw}/J (Stock# 019378). This strain has arrived on our campus and is in the rederivation process. We encourage you to reserve your mice in advance by placing your order as soon as possible. The rederivation process takes approximately 6-7 months”. Currently we are expecting shipping distribution to be available on 11/18/2013 and this task to be completed in second year (12-24 month). During this time we also pursued as an alternative strategy the creation of *Pdx-1-Cre;KRAS*^{G12D} mice. This mouse model has just recently been successfully completed and we are now scaling-up breeding to experimental numbers. This will provide additional support for this aim in the second year (12-24 month).

Aim/Task 2: To determine the role of Dclk1 (DCAMKL-1) in pancreatic tuft cell regulation and regulation of miRNAs in tuft cells. (1 – 12 months)

Task 2a: Here we have successfully crossed *Pdx-1-Cre* to *Dclk1*^{flox/flox} (formally DCAMKL-1) and created the novel compound mouse model *Pdx-1-Cre;Dclk1*^{flox/flox}. This accomplishment came to fruition on or about 3/2013 with large-scale breeding beginning just after. Initial characterization experiments were conducted subsequently and confirmed that Dclk1 was in fact deleted from all pancreatic ductal regions as expected from utilizing the Pdx-1-Cre promoter (Figure 1). We have also characterized the expression of other tuft cell markers Cox1 and Cox2 (Figure 1). The full assessment of these mice for the proposed chronology is currently underway and will be completed early in year two.

Task 2b: Following the recent successful creation and preliminary characterization of the *Pdx-1-Cre;Dclk1*^{flox/flox} compound mice, completion of this task for these specific mice will occur early in year two. However initial mRNA and miRNA analysis utilizing RT-PCR has been completed for the control mice (WT) (Data not shown). Because of

the nature of microarray technology, this portion of this task will be performed when we have the full complement of mice from both *Dclk1* deletion and control mice available at the applicable chronological time points.

Task 2c: The proposed miRNA profiling of *Dclk1*⁺ tuft cells from C57BL/6 wild type mice has been largely completed. Cells of the pancreata were isolated using Alexa Fluor conjugated *Dclk1* antibody and FACS sorted into *ve*⁺ and *ve*⁻ subpopulations. These subpopulations were then subjected to RT-PCR analysis (Figure 2). Ultrastructural investigation of these cell subpopulations is currently underway and will be completed in year two.

Aim 3: To determine the mechanism by which DCAMKL-1+ tuft cells regulate pancreatic cancer initiation. (12 – 24 months)

For this aim are now crossing the completed *Pdx-1-Cre;Dclk1*^{flox/flox} with the *KRAS*^{LSL-G12D} mouse. We are on schedule for this experimental timeline to be completed in year two.

KEY RESEARCH ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Successful creation of the novel compound mouse *Pdx-1-Cre;Dclk1*^{flox/flox}.
- Initial characterization of *Pdx-1-Cre;Dclk1*^{flox/flox} was completed which demonstrated the loss of *Dclk1* expression within tuft cells in all pancreatic ducts.
- Successful creation of the novel compound mouse *Pdx-1-Cre;KRAS*^{LSL-G12D}

REPORTABLE OUTCOMES:

- Created the novel compound mouse *Pdx-1-Cre;Dclk1*^{flox/flox}
- Created the novel compound mouse *Pdx-1-Cre;KRAS*^{LSL-G12D}

CONCLUSION:

With the successful deletion of *Dclk1* throughout the pancreatic ducts, we can begin characterization, which extends our understanding of the role tuft cells play within ducts and their broader effects on the overall pancreatic microenvironment. With the initial phase ductal specific *KRAS*-mutation now finished, we will soon be able to examine the role of ductal cells play in the initiation of neoplastic changes (via *PDX-1-Cre*). Then once completed in year two, the *Pdx-1-Cre;Dclk1*^{flox/flox}; *KRAS*^{LSL-G12D}, which removes *Dclk1* expression from tuft cells and possibly the tuft cells as a whole, will dramatically extend the knowledgebase for the role of tuft cells in pancreatic neoplasia. These finding could very well provide the basis for the development of novel chemotherapeutic drugs targeting these specialized cells.

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APPENDICES: None

SUPPORTING DATA:



