

Differential expression of heme oxygenase (HO)-1 in macrophages of lung tumour and tumour-free lung tissues

P. Boschetto, E. Zeni, L. Mazzetti, P. Maestrelli, E. Marian, B. Murer, P. Querzoli, D. Miotto, G. Rossi, L. M. Fabbri, C. E. Mapp (Ferrara, Padova, Mestre, Modena, Italy)

Source: Annual Congress 2004 - Lung development and cancer

Session: [Lung development and cancer \(/lr/show-Parent/?idP=15517\)](#)

Session type: Oral Presentation

Number: 163

Disease area: Airway diseases



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Abstract

Reactive oxygen species (ROS) are important in the initiation and promotion of cells to neoplastic growth. Cigarette smoke exposure, the primary risk factor in lung cancer development, leads to high levels of ROS in the human airways. Heme oxygenase (HO)-1, the inducible isoform of heme oxygenase, has been implicated in the defence mechanism against ROS-mediated cellular injury. We studied its expression in the macrophages of paired samples of lung tumour and tumour-free lung tissues collected from 21 individuals with surgical resectable non-small cell lung cancer. Paraffin-embedded sections of surgical lung

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specimens were immunostained with antibodies against HO-1. The number of macrophages per high power field was increased in tumour compared with tumour-free lung tissues: median (interquartile range): 17 (10.9-20.7) vs 10.3 (7.6-14.6), $p = 0.01$. The percentage of HO-1 positive macrophages was significantly lower in tumour than in tumour-free lung tissues [46.7 (14.3-70.1) vs 73.1 (61-87.5), $p = 0.01$]. The percentage of HO-1 positive macrophages of tumour-free lung showed a negative correlation with the age at which subjects started to smoke ($p < 0.03$, $r = -0.51$). These results suggest that lung cancer tissue exhibits impaired anti-oxidant defence mechanism mediated by HO-1 in infiltrating macrophages.

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