



HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

Title	Design and In vivo Evaluation of Novel mRNA Lipid Nanoparticles Beyond the Hepatocytes Towards a New Era of Personalized Gene Therapies [an abstract of dissertation and a summary of dissertation review]
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Degree Grantor	北海道大学
Degree Name	博士(薬科学)
Dissertation Number	甲第14843号
Issue Date	2022-03-24
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/85787
Rights(URL)	https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/
Type	doctoral thesis
File Information	Mahmoud_Abdelwakil_review.pdf, 審査の要旨



Doctoral Dissertation Evaluation Review

Degree requested Doctor of Pharmaceutical Science Applicant's name MAHMOUD MANSOUR ABDELWAKIL

Examiner :

Chief examiner	(Professor, Hideyoshi Harashima)
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Title of Doctoral Dissertation

Design and *In vivo* Evaluation of Novel mRNA Lipid Nanoparticles Beyond the Hepatocytes Towards a New Era of Personalized Gene Therapies
(肝実質細胞を越える mRNA 搭載脂質ナノ粒子の設計と *in vivo* 評価による個別化遺伝子治療の幕開け)

Results of Evaluation of the Doctoral Dissertation (Report)

RNA therapeutics are currently at an inflection point and recent progress in genetic drugs has paved the way for the development of a broader second wave of therapies. RNA drugs hold real potential for tackling devastating diseases that are currently resistant to small molecule drugs or monoclonal antibodies. Messenger RNAs (mRNAs) are an emerging therapeutic modality that holds great promise to treat genetic disease specifically and completely. mRNA has been used as a vaccine, as a protein replacement therapy, and even as a means of inducing permanent genomic editing via CRISPR. However, the clinical realization of RNA drugs is limited by the design of safe, targeted, cost-effective and efficient delivery technologies. Furthermore, the design of non-viral vectors beyond hepatocytes for other targets without targeting ligands continues to be an elusive dream. Despite the known concept that active targeting could be achieved by suitably decorating nanoparticles with a specific targeting ligand, we herein provide a demonstration of the surprising ability of a class of engineered ionizable lipo-polyether and lipo-polyether-RNA transporters (iPORT_{ethers} and iPORT_{esters}) based on living/controlled ring-opening polymerization of lactone and epoxide monomers that could circumvent the liver to efficiently and yet selectively deliver mRNA to the lungs and immune cells in spleen without the need for targeting ligands after systemic administration. Mahmoud developed a new series of materials that can achieve safe, efficient and targeted mRNA delivery to Antigen Presenting Cells (APCs) without the need for molecular or active targeting.

Mahmoud thought that with chemistry and only chemistry we can tailor novel materials to develop highly selective delivery tools which could maximize the affordability of such advanced therapeutics for wide range of patients. Additionally, his study shows the surprising impact of stereochemistry of monomeric structure for design of oligomeric or polymeric lipids (tacticity of iPORTs) for *in vivo* functional RNA delivery. He showed that tacticity of iPORTs impacted *in vivo* and *in vitro* RNA delivery and tropism. Furthermore, tacticity impacted *in vivo* biodistribution and affected T-cell biodistribution. In another hand, tacticity did not show impact on LNP physicochemical properties, morphology, and cell viability. Evolution of the steroidal head lead to 7-fold improvement in RNA delivery to splenocytes.

Top performing iPORT based LNPs elicited strong antitumor activity both in a prophylactic and therapeutic approaches. By the virtue of biosafety, efficiency and targeting, Estriol-GA05-30 LNPs have strong potential for translating mRNA cancer vaccines for the next stage. In another hand, \mathcal{E} -decalactone based lipomers NP technology enabled selective and efficient mRNA delivery to tissues beyond the hepatocytes. Expanding the chemical space of smart materials could enable the directed evolution of NPs for hard-to-reach targets without the need for targeting ligand. In particular he identified lipomers which elicited efficient mRNA expression *in vitro* and *in vivo*. The engineered \mathcal{E} -decalactone lipomers reported herein represent a versatile approach for the simple engineering of efficient lung targeted gene therapies from renewable sources. Furthermore, diversifying the chemical space of \mathcal{E} -decalactone lipomers via design of combinatorial libraries could be an easy and scalable strategy for development of the next generation gene therapies beyond the hepatocytes. Optimization of the monomeric structure was proven to be a novel strategy to improve mRNA delivery efficiency and control the *in vivo* tropism.

Interestingly, co-assembly of iPORTs with phospholipids and cholesterol can open new avenues for endless space of optimization that could be exploited for achieving interesting non-hepatocyte RNA delivery. Controlling the tail length of iPORTs (DP) was shown a key factor to enhance the efficiency of RNA delivery where it was initiator dependent and required case by case optimization. The iPORTs technology could pave the way for clinical translation of mRNA drugs to treat lung diseases and offer endless possibilities to engineer the immune cells in spleen. This would interestingly help the wide range application and affordability of the advanced gene therapies for patients suffering from hard-to-treat diseases such as cancer, autoimmunity, and infectious diseases. This cost-effective, simple design based on commercially available monomers and monomers coming from sustainable sources could be an efficient strategy for evading *in vivo* barriers and successfully delivering gene therapies to hard-to-reach target sites without targeting ligands to treat undruggable diseases such as cancer, autoimmunity, and genetic diseases.

In conclusion, the author has developed a new strategy for a tissue selective targeting of nucleic acids to cure many kinds of diseases, and this will contribute to the field of Nanomedicines.

Therefore, we acknowledge that the author is qualified to be granted a Doctorate of Pharmaceutical Science from Hokkaido University.