

Application of Cumulus Cells as Factors to Predict the Outcome of IVF-ET

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= Abstract =

Since in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer(IVF-ET) was firstly applied to humans by Edwards et al. at 1965, it has been discussed that many factors such as ovarian stimulation protocol, quality of spermatozoa and oocyte, culture condition, status of embryo, embryo replacement method and uterine receptivity might influence to its success rate. Among them, the following two factors have been suggested as being the most important in IVF-ET. One is to obtain and evaluate good quality oocytes/embryos, the other is to enhance the implantation ability of embryos. At present the most convenient system to evaluate oocytes/embryos is based on their morphological analysis and the status of oocytes-cumulus cell complexes. However, this evaluation method may be unreasonable because morphological analyses largely depend on an individual basis and there is no complete correlation between quality of oocytes/embryos and the outcomes of IVF-ET.

It has been well known that apoptosis is programmed cell death for homeostasis and is closely involved in most reproductive processes including follicular atresia. Seifer et al. reported that apoptosis can be used as a means of estimating ovarian reserve in women undergoing in vitro fertilization. On the other hand, co-culture has been applied to improve the culture conditions and implantation ability of the embryo.

Therefore, this study was performed to establish the evaluation methods of oocytes on the basis of the incidence of apoptosis in cumulus cells and to understand the relationships between the status of cumulus cell and the outcome of co-culture.

The results were as follows :

1. The incidence of apoptosis in cumulus cells markedly increased in patients aged 40 or over, while the fertilization rate was greatly decreased in those age group.
2. Apoptosis in cumulus cells was found in both the fertilized oocytes and unfertilized oocytes, but the incidence of apoptosis was higher in unfertilized oocytes.
3. There is no clear correlation between apoptosis in cumulus cells and the number of oocytes retrieved. However, the incidence of apoptosis was increased when the number of oocytes retrieved was 5 and fewer in comparison with 6-10.
4. Embryo grade was significantly affected by the incidence of apoptosis in cumulus cells.
5. Pregnancy rate of IVF-ET per cycle was 29.4%, and the pregnant group had the higher fertilization rate and a significantly lower incidence of apoptosis in cumulus cells compared with the nonpregnant group.
6. When cumulus cells were used as helper cells in the co-culture of the embryo, in vitro activity of cumulus cells based on morphological change and proliferation did not influence the quality of embryo, but was closely associated with the implantation rate and pregnancy rate, which was enhanced when morphological changes and proliferation of cumulus cells was more active.
7. This difference in the outcome of IVF-ET according to in vitro activity of cumulus cells used for co-culture was not associated with the incidence of apoptosis in cumulus cells, but rather had likely relations with the different secretion pattern of protein, which may be an embryotrophic factor by cumulus cells.

These results suggest that the incidence of apoptosis in cumulus cells can be used in predicting oocyte qualities and the outcomes of IVF-ET. And the effect of co-culture largely depends on the in vitro activity of cumulus cells as well.

Key Words: IVF-ET, Cumulus cell, Apoptosis, Co-culture

(in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer:IVF-ET) Edwards(1965)

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20-30%
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(meiotic competence failure oocyte) ,6
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가 (fragments)
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(apoptosis) homeostasis
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apoptosis detection kit
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1997 8 1998 7 1
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2.

1)

gonadotropin releasing hormone agonist(buserelin acetate; Frankfrut, Germany)/follicle-stimulating hormone(FSH, metrodin ; Serono, Norwell, MA)/human menopausal gonadotropin(hMG, humegon; Organon, Holland) (long protocol)

buserelin acetate 21 0.5mg
 3 estradiol(E2) 50pg/ml (conversion factor to SI unit, 3.671)

3 hMG150IU FSH150IU
 E2 Human chorionic gonadotropin(hCG) E2 7
 18mm 16mm 가 2
 E2 가 hCG(pregnyl; Organon, Holland) 10,000IU
 hCG 34-36 (7.0 MHz vaginal sector scanner, B&K, Denmark) (Falcon 1001, Becton Dicknson and Company, Lincoln Park, NJ, USA)

가 0.9 ml IVF-M(Medicult Inc., Copenhagen O, Denmark) (Falcon 3037, Becton Dicknson and Company) 4-5 37 , 5% CO2

2)

30 100%-90%-50% 3 percoll
 400xg 20 100% percoll
 Pasteur pipette 10% Ham's F-10(Gibco, 81200-032, Grand island, N.Y., USA) 5ml 200xg 10 2 , 1-2 swim-up 10-12 1-2 x 10⁶/ml 가 ,

3)

16-20 2 (pronuclei) 150-200µm micropipette 2-3 ,
 IVF-M 1ml가 2
 37 , 5% CO2

4)

가
 10% Ham's F-10
 2-3 , 1ml
 20 1 1ml 2 37 , 5% CO2
 48 가

5)

5 Bolton (1989) grade A 8 가
 (Table 1).23 Wallace catheter , grade A 8
 3 8 5 3
 가 6

Table 1. Criteria used for the morphological grade of the embryo

Grade A(good quality): equal blastomeres and no fragmentation
 Grade B(fair quality) : unequal blastomeres and no fragmentation
 Grade C(poor quality):partial equal blastomeres, small(<30%) fragmentation
 Grade D(bad quality) : unequal blastomeres, large(>30%) fragmentation

6) capacity) 2 group (proliferative)
 group I , 가 ,
 group II (Fig. 1).

7) (Falcon 3002, Becton Dicknson and Company) 가 2-5
 - Pasteur pipette 10%
 - Ham's F10 (Falcon 3037, Becton Dicknson and Company)
 0.1% hyaluronidase가 serum-free Ham's F10 가 가
 가 0.01% 100µm micropipette
 , 20µl , 20µl
 . 2 micropipette 1 ,
 . 2 slide glass 10µl ApopTag In Situ
 Apoptosis Detection Kit Fluorescein (Oncor Inc., Gaithersburg, MD, USA)
 . 1% (w/v) paraformaldehyde가 50mM PBS(pH 7.4) 15
 70% coplin jar
 4 , 2
 . PBS 3
 digoxigenin-dUTP terminal deoxynucleotidyl transferase(TdT), anti-digoxigenin fluorescence antibody
 가 DNA 3 -OH
 1,000 200
 (Fig. 2).

8) metabolite labeling
 Metabolite labeling - micropipette
 0.1% hyaluronidase serum-free human tubal fluid(HTF) 가 HTF
 . 10% 가 HTF
 가 1 × 10⁵ seeding , metabolite labeling methionine
 가 HTF 48 24 10%
 free-HTF 가 HTF 2 , methionine free, serum
 methionine free, serum free-HTF 2 [35S]-methionine(50µ Ci/ml, Amersham) 가
 가 HTF 2 24 . Labeling 10%

5X laemini sample buffer(LSB) 4:1 가 sodium dodecyl sulfate-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis(SDS-PAGE) .
 LSB가 가 100 3
 liquid scintillation counter(LKB) loading . Laemini
 (Laemini, 1970) 10% polyacryamide gel 10 .24
 gel commassie brillant blue dimethylsulfoxide(DMSO)(Sigma, St. Louis, MO, USA)
 15% diphenyloxazol(PPO) (Sigma, St. Louis, MO, USA) DMSO ,
 gel X-ray film cassette -80 , marker(Prestained Marker, Sigma, St. Louis, MO, USA) .

9)

(ANOVA),
 unpaired-Student's *t*-test, chi-square ,
 p<0.05 .

Fig 1. Phase contrast microscopic morphological changes and proliferation in cumulus cells used for co-culture 2 days after oocyte recovery. A: Extensive morphological changes and proliferations (Group I), B: no or minimal morphological changes(Group II). Magnification $\times 200$.

Fig. 2. Immunofluorescent microscopic detection of apoptosis in cumulus cells stained with apoptosis detection kit(Oncor). Magnification $\times 1,000$. Apoptotic cumulus cells show intense yellow fluorescence(arrowhead), whereas normal cells show red color stained with propidium iodide(arrow).

1.

36-40 0.75 ± 0.20%, 40 30 0.61 ± 0.10%, 31-35 0.75 ± 0.13%,
 40 70% 1.59 ± 0.23% 가 , 40 가 40% (p<0.005).
 (p<0.05)(Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of the incidence of apoptosis according to age of patients

Age (years)	No. of cycles	No. of oocytes		Fertilization rate (%)	Incidence of apoptosis (%)
		retrieved	used for assay	Mean ± SEM	Mean ± SEM
30	13	151	36	88.4 ± 4.4a*	0.61 ± 0.10 †
31 - 35	13	105	32	63.4 ± 11.4a*	0.75 ± 0.13 †
36 - 40	4	43	12	72.8 ± 14.1a*	0.75 ± 0.20 †
41	4	31	11	40.0 ± 24.5b*	1.59 ± 0.23 †

* : p<0.05 (a vs b)

† : p<0.005 (vs each group)

가 5 6 가 5
 (p<0.05), 1.13 ± 0.19%, 6-10 0.63 ± 0.12%, 11 0.77 ± 0.11%
 가 5 6-10 가 (p<0.05), (p=0.07), 가
 5 64.3 ± 13.2%, 6-10 70.4 ± 11.5%, 11 72.9 ± 8.5%
 (p=0.84)(Table 3).

Table 3. Comparison of the incidence of apoptosis according to the number of oocytes retrieved

No. of oocytes retrieved	No. of cycles	Age (mean)	No. of oocytes used for assay	Fertilization rate (%)	Incidence of apoptosis (%)
				Mean ± SEM	Mean ± SEM
5	10	35.3	23	64.3 ± 13.2	1.13 ± 0.19*
6-10	9	30.2	23	70.4 ± 11.5	0.63 ± 0.12*
>10	15	31.8	45	72.9 ± 8.5	0.77 ± 0.11

p-value	<0.05	0.84	0.07
* p < 0.05 (vs both group)			
2.	91	가 28 0.43 ± 0.07% (p < 0.001) (Fig. 3).	가 .
	1.80 ± 0.35%		
3.	가	87.3% (55/63) grade A	B ,
grade D			grade A
0.24 ± 0.06%, grade B (p < 0.001) (Table 4).	0.42 ± 0.12%, grade C	1.18 ± 0.23%	가

Fig. 3. Comparison of the incidence of apoptosis between fertilized and unfertilized oocytes.

A : Fertilized oocytes group (n=63), B : Unfertilized oocytes group (n=28).

n ; the number of oocytes used for apoptosis assay.

*Mean ± SEM

* p < 0.001

group I 0.56 ± 0.13% , group II 0.86 ± 0.10%
 (p=0.063)(Fig. 4).
 (embryotrophic factor)

Fig. 5
 metabolite labeling gel(panel B) 35S-methionine X-ray (panel A)
 24
 (lane 1, 3) 200Kd, 130Kd, 100Kd
 (lane 2, 4) 가 38Kd 30Kd
 (a,b,c) lane 3 가 가 , lane 4

Table 6. The relationships between the status of cumulus cells and the outcome of IVF-ET

Status of cumulus cells	Group I	Group II	p-value
Age(mean)	31.3	32.3	0.502
No. of cycles	15	19	
No. of oocytes retrieved/cycle	9.0	10.5	0.426
Fertilization rate(%)*	74.2 ± 9.5	72.8 ± 7.6	0.905
Quality of embryo			
A	44/63(68.2%)	60/91(65.9%)	
B	10/63(15.8%)	14/91(15.3%)	0.766
C	7/63(11.1%)	13/91(14.2%)	
D	2/63(0.03%)	4/91(0.04%)	
No. of embryos transferred/cycle*	4.7 ± 0.6	5.2 ± 0.5	0.487
Implantation rate(%)a	12.1	6.8	<0.05
Pregnancy rate/cycle(%)b	40.0	21.1	<0.05

* Values are mean ± SEM

a: Defined as the total number of visualized gestational sacs with fetal cardiac activity divided by the total number of embryos transferred in each treatment group.

b: Included in clinical pregnancy defined as visualization of an intrauterine sac with ultrasonography.

Fig. 4. The relationship between status and apoptotic incidence of cumulus cells.
n ; the number of oocytes used for apoptosis assay.
* Mean \pm SEM
* p=0.063

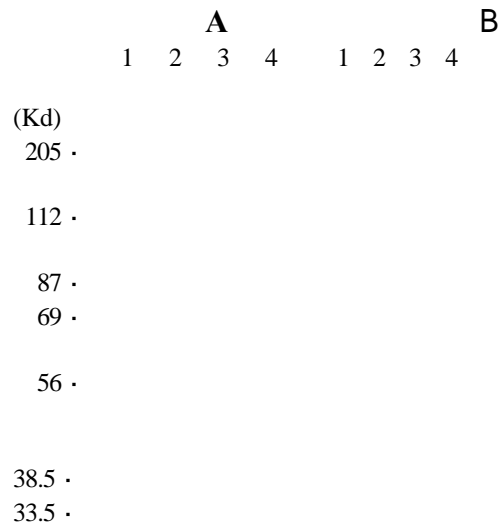


Fig. 5. Secretion pattern of cumulus cells used for co-culture. Group I cumulus cells(lane 1,3) and group II cells(lane 2,4) were labeled in [³⁵S]-methionine. After 2 hours chase and 24 hours pulse, the supernatant was collected and analyzed by SDS-PAGE and fluorography(panelA).Justbeforefluorography,SDS-PAGE gel stained with commassie blue and dehydrated and amplified(panelB). On left side, values represent molecular weight of prestained markers. Arrows indicate different proteins in secretion pattern according to cumulus cells.

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Apoptosis Detection Kit Fluorescein(Oncor Inc.)
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ApopTag In Situ
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가 , 5

6-10

4.

5.

29.4% ,

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6.

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7.

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