

# Effects of Prostamide/Prostaglandin F Synthase on Melanogenesis and Tumor Metastatic Potential of B16 Melanoma

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Prostaglandin (PG)  $F_{2\alpha}$  and prostaglandin ethanolamide (prostamide, PM)  $F_{2\alpha}$  are cyclooxygenase-catalyzed metabolites of arachidonic acid and arachidonyl ethanolamide (anandamide), respectively. PM/Prostaglandin F synthase (PM/PGFS) catalyzes the conversion of  $PGH_2$  to  $PGF_{2\alpha}$  and  $PMH_2$  to  $PMF_{2\alpha}$ . In this study, we established PM/PGFS-knock out (KO) B16 melanoma cells to analyze the role of PM/PGFS in melanogenesis and tumor metastatic potential.

**Methods:** PM/PGFS-KO B16 melanoma cells were generated by genome editing using CRISPR/Cas9 and cultured as single cells by limited dilution. We measured  $PGF_{2\alpha}$  and melanin contents and assessed cell growth, *matrix metalloproteinase-2* (MMP-2, type IV collagenase) levels, and intracellular signaling molecules such as CREB, AKT, JNK, and p38. Tumor metastasis in the lungs was evaluated by intravenous injection of B16 melanoma cells into mice.

**Results:** PM/PGFS deletion decreased  $PGF_{2\alpha}$  production; however, it did not alter melanogenesis, cell growth, MMP-2 levels, intracellular signaling, and tumor metastasis.

**Conclusion:** PM/PGFS enzyme has no effects on melanogenesis, cell growth, and tumor metastasis in the B16 melanoma cells.

**Keywords:** CRISPR/Cas9, *matrix metalloproteinase-2*, melanin, PM/PGFS

## INTRODUCTION

Prostaglandin (PG)  $F_{2\alpha}$  is a product of cyclooxygenase-catalyzed metabolism of arachidonic acid.  $PGF_{2\alpha}$  induces luteolysis during the estrous cycle, plays essential roles in parturition with its strong uterine contractile actions, and has vasoconstriction and bronchoconstriction activities<sup>1</sup>. Prostaglandin ethanolamide (prostamide, PM)  $F_{2\alpha}$  is a cyclooxygenase-2-catalyzed metabolite of arachidonyl ethanolamide (anandamide) that exerts biological activities, such as pain transmission<sup>2</sup> and adipogenesis<sup>3</sup>. The enzyme prostamide/prostaglandin F synthase (PM/PGFS) catalyzes the conversion of  $PGH_2$  to  $PGF_{2\alpha}$  and  $PMH_2$  to  $PMF_{2\alpha}$ , and is mainly expressed in the central nervous system<sup>4</sup>. We have previously reported that PM/PGFS is constitutively expressed in the myelin sheaths and cultured oligodendrocytes<sup>5</sup>. PM/PGFS has been reported to regulate intraocular pressure<sup>6</sup>.

B16 melanoma cells are frequently used as tumor models to investigate the mechanism of metastasis. A murine model of experimental metastasis in lung can be obtained by

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intravenous injection of B16 melanoma cells<sup>7</sup>. These cells produce melanin and are used to study melanogenesis<sup>8</sup>.

PGF<sub>2α</sub> is a key regulator of matrix metalloproteinase (MMP)-2 expression<sup>9,10</sup>. MMP-2 is a type IV collagenase, which plays major role in degrading the extracellular matrix during cancer invasion and metastasis<sup>11,12</sup>. PGF<sub>2α</sub> enhances migration and invasion of B16 melanoma cells *in vitro* Matrigel assay<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, PGF<sub>2α</sub> might increase tumor metastasis through the enhancement of MMP-2 expression. In this study, we aimed to analyze the role of PM/PGFS in tumor metastasis and melanogenesis using *PM/PGFS*-knock out (KO) B16 melanoma cells.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Cell Culture

B16 mouse melanoma cells (JCRB0202) were obtained from the RIKEN Cell Bank (Osaka, Japan). The cells were maintained in Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium supplemented with 10 % (v/v) fetal bovine serum and 1 % penicillin–streptomycin (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA) in a humidified atmosphere with 5 % CO<sub>2</sub> at 37 °C.

### Generation of *PM/PGFS*-KO B16 Melanoma Cells

Experimental protocols were approved by DNA experiment Safety Committee of Saitama Medical University. *PM/PGFS*-KO B16 melanoma cells were generated using a Guide-it CRISPR/Cas9 system (Takara Bio Inc., Shiga, Japan). *PM/PGFS*-specific gRNAs (No. 1 Forward: 5'-CCGGGTGGTGGACCTTGGTCGCGT-3' and Reverse: 5'-AAACACGCGACCAAGTCCACCAC-3'; PAM sequence; AGG, No. 2 Forward: 5'-CCGGCACACGCTCCTACGCGACCA-3' and Reverse: 5'-AAACTGGTCGCGTAGGAGCGTGTG-3'; PAM sequence; AGG) were designed using CRISPR direct<sup>14</sup> and synthetic oligos were ligated into Guide-it-ZsGreen1 vector. The vectors were transfected into B16 melanoma cells with Lipofectamine (Invitrogen). B16 melanoma cells expressing ZsGreen were selected and cultured as single cells by limited dilution. A Guide-it Genotype confirmation kit (Takara Bio Inc.) was used to determine the homozygous mutants. In-del detection and cloning of targeting site were performed using a Guide-it Indel Identification kit (Takara Bio Inc.). The colonies for KO cells were identified by the changes in DNA sequences.

### RNA Extraction and Reverse transcription (RT)-PCR

Total RNA was extracted from cells using ISOGEN (Nippon Gene, Tokyo, Japan) following the manufacturer's instructions. Total RNA was reverse-transcribed using a PrimeScript RT reagent kit (Takara Bio Inc.). The following primer sequences were used for RT-PCR: *PM/PGFS* (Forward: 5'- ATGAATGTGGTGGACCTTGG -3' and Reverse: 5'- AACCACCATCCAGAAACTCCT -3').

### Enzyme-linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA)

B16 melanoma cells were plated (5 × 10<sup>5</sup> cells/well) in 6-well plates and incubated for 24 h. The cells were then incubated with 10 μM arachidonic acid (MP Biom, #150384, Solon, OH). After 24 h, the medium was replaced with phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) containing 3 μM of a Ca<sup>2+</sup> ionophore, calcimycin (ab120287, Abcam, Cambridge, MA). After 3 h, the culture supernatant was collected by centrifugation, snap-frozen, and stored at -80 °C. The PGF<sub>2α</sub> concentration was measured using an EIA kit (Cayman Chemicals, Ann Arbor, MI).

### Liquid Chromatography-tandem Mass Spectrometry Analysis of Prostamides

Prostamides were purified by solid phase extraction with Oasis HLB columns (Waters Corporation, Milford, MA). The methods for purification and liquid chromatography were same as previously described<sup>15</sup>. Briefly, prostamides were extracted from cells or supernatants with 1 ng of internal standards (PGF<sub>2α</sub>-EA-d<sub>4</sub>, PGE<sub>2</sub>-d<sub>4</sub>; Cayman chemicals). Prostamides were separated on a Waters X-Bridge C18 (3.5 μm, 150 mm × 1.0 mm i.d., Waters Corporation) using with a high-performance liquid chromatography system (Nexera LC-30AD, Shimadzu Corporation, Kyoto, Japan) and analyzed using a triple quadrupole mass spectrometer (LCMS-8040; Shimadzu Corporation). Prostamides were identified by multiple reaction monitoring in negative ion mode. Data were analyzed using LabSolutions software (Shimadzu Corporation).

### Cell Growth Assay

Cell growth was determined using the microculture tetrazolium technique (MTT). MTT assay provides a quantitative measure of the number of viable cells by determining the amount of formazan crystals produced by metabolically active cells. Cells (1 × 10<sup>5</sup> cells/well) in 24-well plates were treated and 50 μl of MTT reagent [3-(4,5-dimethyl-2-thiazolyl)-2,5-diphenyl-2H-tetrazolium bromide] (FUJIFILM, Osaka, Japan) (5 mg/ml in PBS) was added to each well. The plates were incubated in a humidified atmosphere of 5 % of CO<sub>2</sub> at 37 °C for 4 h. After removing the medium, formazan crystals were dissolved in 200 μl isopropanol/HCl (100 : 0.34), and the absorbance was measured using a micro plate reader (Bio-Tek, Redmond, WA) at 570 nm relative to 630 nm.

### Determination of Melanin Content

B16 melanoma cells (1 × 10<sup>5</sup> cells/well) were seeded in 24-well plates and incubated for 24 h. The medium was then replaced with 499 μl of fresh medium and 1 ml of DMSO containing α-Melanocyte Stimulating Hormone (MSH, LKT Laboratories, St Paul, MN), forskolin (20 mM, Cayman Chemicals), and phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate (PMA, 100 mM, Sigma-Aldrich, Deisenhofen, Germany) was added. The control cells were treated with DMSO only. Cells were incubated for 48 h and the medium was replaced with





*PM/PGFS* deletion caused premature termination of its protein synthesis and undetectable expression of *PM/PGFS* at the mRNA and protein levels in KO B16 melanoma cells. Moreover, *PM/PGFS* deletion caused low  $\text{PGF}_{2\alpha}$  production from B16 melanoma cells. These results suggested that *PM/PGFS*-KO B16 melanoma cells were successfully generated. On the other hand,  $\text{PMF}_{2\alpha}$  production was not observed in WT and *PM/PGFS*-KO B16 melanoma cells. B16 melanoma cells probably had low potential to produce series of PMs, because not only  $\text{PMF}_{2\alpha}$ ,  $\text{PME}_2$  and  $\text{PMD}_2$  also were not detected by mass spectrometry (data not shown). Therefore, B16 melanoma cells may contain small amount of anandamide, a substrate for *PM/PGFS*.

$\alpha$ -MSH, forskolin, and PMA are potent activators of melanogenesis<sup>16,17</sup>. *PM/PGFS* deletion did not affect melanogenesis in the presence or absence of these activators, suggesting that *PM/PGFS* does not affect melanogenesis in B16 melanoma cells.

*PM/PGFS* deletion had no effect on the growth and tumor metastatic potential of B16 melanoma cells. Therefore,  $\text{PGF}_{2\alpha}$  produced by *PM/PGFS* did not affect cell growth and tumor metastasis. This is contrasting to previous evidences that  $\text{PGF}_{2\alpha}$  upregulates MMP-2 activity and enhances invasion of B16 melanoma cells<sup>9,10,13</sup>. A comparatively higher dose of  $\text{PGF}_{2\alpha}$  (1  $\mu\text{g}/\text{ml}$ ) was exogenously used in previous studies<sup>10,13</sup>, which might be responsible for MMP-2 activation. In contrast, approximately 100  $\text{pg}/\text{ml}$  of  $\text{PGF}_{2\alpha}$  produced by the cells in our study was probably insufficient to activate MMP-2. Intracellular signaling molecules such as CREB, AKT, JNK, and p38 are important regulators of activities in B16 melanoma cells<sup>18-20</sup>. *PM/PGFS* deletion did not change cellular events in these cells probably owing to unaffected intracellular signaling pathways. Taken together, our results suggest that *PM/PGFS* has no effects on melanogenesis, cell growth, and tumor metastatic potential of B16 melanoma cells.

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