Type VII and XVII Collagen mRNA Expressions in Regenerated Epidermal Laminae in Chronic Equine Laminitis

Atsutoshi KUWANO1*, Telhisa HASEGAWA1 and Katsuhiko ARAI2

1Equine Research Institute, Japan Racing Association, 321–4 Tokami-cho, Utsunomiya-shi, Tochigi 320-0856, 2Faculty of Agriculture Scleroprotein and Leather Research Institute, Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology, 3–5–8 Saiwai-cho, Fuchu-shi, Tokyo 183-8509, Japan

To confirm ability forming the basement membrane of the regenerated laminar epidermis (rLE) in chronic laminitis, expression of type VII and type XVII collagen mRNAs in the rLE was studied applying sequences of two type of murine collagens. On northern blot analysis, complement DNA (cDNA) probes adjusted from the murine type VII and type XVII collagen could hybridize with the equine mRNAs, and each signal was detected as single-bands at approximately 9.5 kb and 5.6 kb, respectively. Contrasting with the expression level of equine glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase mRNA, the band of type VII collagen mRNA in laminitis was stronger than normal, but the type XVII collagen mRNA in laminitis was less than normal. By in situ hybridization, positive signals in response to the murine type VII and type XVII collagen mRNA probes could be detected in the equine laminitic rLE region. From these results, it is concluded that the keratinocytes constructing the rLE in chronic stage of laminitis can express type VII and type XVII collagen mRNAs and these expression patterns were different from the normal.

Key words: equine, laminitis, type VII collagen, type XVII collagen

In equine laminitis, the prodromal or initial stage is associated with laminar circulation dysfunction [15] or zinc-dependent proteinase overload [17] of the laminar region. The pathologic evidence at first stage is disconnection between the laminar epidermis (LE) and the laminar dermis (LD) resulted from basement membrane zone (BMZ) degradation [16–18]. While the detached epidermis structure loses vascular support and rapidly necrotizes, some keratinocytes attaching to the BMZ subsequently regenerate the LE [10, 16] and produce finally the ectopic white line tissue [9]. In this healing process, the regenerated laminar epidermis (rLE) could re-organize the BMZ in which the type VII and XVII collagens are included [10]. In this pilot study, we tried to confirm whether the rLE could express above these two types of extracellular matrix in two laminitis cases (case 1: two year old filly, two weeks after onset; case 2: three year old female, four weeks after onset) contrasting with one control horse (four year old female). Production ability of these matrices can be a good mark to know how the regenerated keratinocytes recovered because these collagens are produced mainly by keratinocytes [1, 5, 8]. The type VII collagen is one of main components constructing the microscopic structure of anchoring fibril [23] and the type XVII collagen is a part of the hemi-desmosome in the BMZ [13]. It is known that these microscopic structures complete the joining of the epidermis and dermis [2].

For sampling, the laminar interface in proximo-distal 50% hoof wall height of the each right fore-hoof was trimmed by the previously described method [10, 19]. One section was rapidly frozen in liquid nitrogen for...
northern blot analysis. Another was fixed by methacarn fixative for conventional histology and in situ hybridization (ISH) analysis. Meanwhile, the equine type VII and XVII collagens mRNA sequences were still not verified at the beginning of this study. So that we prepared the murine type VII collagen alpha 1 (776 nt to 1,635 nt) and XVII collagen alpha 1 (1,217 nt to 1,757 nt) complementary DNA (cDNA) fragments amplified from the BALB/c mouse body skin RNA by the listed primer sets (Table 1) to analyze with molecular biology. These cDNA probes labeled with digoxigenin (DIG) were generated by PCR using the PCR DIG probe synthesis kit3 with the RT-PCR products cloned into pGEM-T Easy plasmid vector 1 as the templates. An ABIPRISM 377 DNA auto-sequencer was used for each cDNA probe, and the base sequences were then confirmed to be the murine’s collagen sequences by Sanger’s dideoxy termination method [20]. On the other hand, previously reported cDNA fragment corresponding the equine glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH) cDNA (1.4 kb) was utilized as housekeeping gene probe [4]. Nonradioactive northern blotting hybridization analysis was performed according to a previous method [6]. Poly(A+) RNA samples of the laminar region were purified using Oligotex dt30 Super2. One μg of poly(A+) RNA of each sample was separated on 2.2M formaldehyde-containing 1% denaturing agarose gel, and transferred onto a nylon membrane3. After UV crosslinking of this membrane, conventional procedure to detect the DIG-labeled cDNA probe was according to a chemiluminescence method [4]. The chemiluminescent signals were detected on X-ray films4. The film developed with RENDOL5 according to the manufacturer’s protocol and the intensities of signals were scanned with a dual-wavelength scanner6 with a CCS-1 program6 to measure the densitometric intensity of each positive signal on the film. The value of each mRNA is expressed relative to the GAPDH mRNA value and differences between the relative values of each collagen mRNAs were compared. For ISH analysis, horizontal paraffin sections (6 μm) of the each laminar epidermis were prepared by the conventional methods. After preparing the tissue sections, digoxigenin-labeled sense/antisense RNA probes were synthesized by Sp6 or T7 RNA polymerase with DIG-dUTP using a DIG RNA labeling kit3. Then, type VII and type XVII collagen mRNA expressions in laminar region were determined using these RNA probes and consequently signalized by alkaline-phosphatase-labeled anti-digoxigenin antibody3 and Nitro Blue Tetrazolium (NBT), 5-Bromo-4-chloro-3-indolyl phosphate (BCIP) and 5 mM MgCl2 in 100 mM Tris-HCl buffer (pH 9.6). The nucleus was comparatively stained with safranin. Each sense strand probe was used as a negative control. In results on northern blotting hybridization analysis, murine type VII and type XVII collagen cDNAs hybridized with the equine mRNAs to show signals of approximately 9.5 kb and 5.6 kb single bands, respectively (Fig. 1). This size of equine type VII collagen mRNA was approximately same as the type VII collagen mRNA of human [22] and murine [11]. On the other hand, the size of equine type XVII collagen mRNA was also approximately same as the type XVII collagen mRNA of human [7] and murine [12]. This indicated that these murine collagen cDNA probes could detect the equine collagen mRNAs and that keratinocytes constructing the rLE could express the type VII and XVII collagen mRNAs. The band of type VII collagen mRNA in laminitis showed distinctly stronger than normal contrasting with the level of equine GAPDH mRNA. On the contrary, the band of type XVII collagen mRNA in laminitis was weaker than

Table 1. Sequences of PCR primer sets used in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>primer sequence</th>
<th>annealing temperature</th>
<th>product size</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>equine GAPDH (GenBank accession No. AF083897)</td>
<td>57.6°C</td>
<td>266 bp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5'-CCCTGCTCTCCTAGTGCCGTG-3' (sense, 76–95 nt)</td>
<td>64.5°C</td>
<td>860 bp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5'-CGAAGGTTGAGAAGTGGGTG-3' (antisense, 322–341 nt)</td>
<td>62.4°C</td>
<td>541 bp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>murine type VII collagen (GenBank accession No. MMU32107)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5'-AGGGTGACAAAGGTGATCGTGGGG-3' (sense, 776–799 nt)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5'-GCTGCCATTCTCGTCCGTCTTCTCAGG-3' (antisense, 1612-1635 nt)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>murine type XVII collagen (GenBank accession No. NM_007732)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5'-GAAGAAAAGTGCCCCAGGCTCC-3' (sense, 1217-1240 nt)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5'-CAGCAGCAGCACGAGGGTACGAGCAG-3' (antisense, 1734-1757 nt)</td>
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normal. The level of type VII collagen mRNA in two cases was approximately 7-fold greater than that in normal case. In contrast, the level of type XVII collagen tended to decrease in the laminitis (an approximate fifth part of the normal) based on the level of mRNA for GAPDH. From these results, it was recognized that expression patterns of these two types of collagen in the rLE differed from the normal one in healing manner of the chronic stage. By ISH, each antisense probe showed a positive reaction to type VII
and type XVII collagen mRNAs not only in the LE of the normal horse (data not shown) but also in the rLE of laminitic horses (Fig. 2). These positive reactions in all horses were basically observed in the non-keratinized epidermal tissue. Furthermore, each sense probe showed negative or obviously weak reactions on serial sections.

In conclusion, the keratinocytes in the laminitic rLE can express type VII and type XVII collagen mRNAs. Strong signal intensity of type VII collagen mRNA in laminitic hooves suggested that the rLE enhanced population of the type VII collagens in healing process. In the reported study to assess the generation of cultured human keratinocyte autografts by the electron microscopy, the anchoring fibril density restored and was equal to those of normal biopsy skin within two weeks after grafting [5]. As same as the human keratinocyte autografts, equine keratinocytes of the rLE can aggressively form the anchoring fibrils within two weeks after onset of laminitis. Meanwhile, the signal intensity of type XVII collagen mRNA in laminitis showed lower than normal in blotting analysis. It suggested that capability to form the hemidesmosomes in rLE might be lower than normal. This hypothesis is consistent with the previous report [10] in which existence of few hemidesmosomes were recognized in the BMZ. At current, we cannot propose any regulatory mechanism that can promote the type VII collagen and suppress the type XVII collagen, simultaneously in horse’s foot. Dermatologist has already elucidated that tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF-α), interleukin-1beta (IL-1β) [21] and transforming growth factor-beta (TGF-β) [3] can up-regulate the type VII collagen gene expression. Meanwhile, the type XVII collagen gene expression was not influenced by above cytokines [14]. It seems that these two collagens are controlled under different regulation systems. Further study regarding the production manner of these BMZ-ECMs in laminitis is needed to more clarify the expression pattern in total healing process using probes of the equine collagen mRNAs.

References
Cloning of type XVII collagen. Complementary and genomic DNA sequences of mouse 180-kilodalton bullous pemphigoid antigen (BPAG2) predict an interrupted collagenous domain, a transmembrane segment, and unusual features in the 5'-end of the gene and the 3'-untranslated region of the mRNA. J. Biol. Chem. 268: 8825–8834.


