

An Unveiled Cell-Death Mechanism Exclusive to Human Cancer Cells

Malka Cohen-Armon

The Sackler School of Medicine, and Sagol School of Neuroscience, Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv 69978, Israel.

The modified phenanthridine PJ34 blocks the post translational modifications of specific proteins highly expressed in human malignant cells. This exclusively arrested mitosis in human malignant cells by inserting flaws in their mitotic spindle structure. Cancer cells were efficiently eradicated by Mitotic catastrophe cell death, while similarly treated healthy proliferating cells are spared and continue to proliferate as untreated cells. This cytotoxic effect was examined in a variety of human epithelial cancer cells in tissue culture and in xenografts. Three affected proteins were identified out of all tested proteins implicated in mitosis in epithelial malignant cells compared to healthy epithelial cells. Two kinesins, KifC1/HSET and Kif18A, and NuMA were identified. The identified kinesins are already examined for their potential cancer therapy. Blocking the post translational modifications of NuMA exclusively prevented the protein binding capacity of NuMA in cancer cells. This prevented its clustering in the spindle poles, which stabilizes the spindles and enables alignment of chromosomes in spindle mid-zone. Un-aligned chromosomes and dispersed NuMA and centrosomes were detected in distorted spindles of human cancer cells treated with PJ34. Mitosis was arrested in the anaphase and this lead to cell death via cytochrome-c release activating caspase cascades. Thus, the cytotoxic activity of PJ34 unveiled a new mechanism causing self- eradication of human cancer cells, including cancer cells that are not responsive to current therapies.

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