

Mitochondrial tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} Mutations in Patients with Essential Hypertension

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Abstract

Arterial hypertension remains a major modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Previous studies have noted a maternal effect on blood pressure (BP). Mutations in mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) have become an additional target of investigations on the missing BP heritability. The major objective of the present work was to investigate mutations in the tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} gene in 20 Pakistani patients with essential hypertension (EH) and compare the amplified sequences to the mitochondrial reference sequence. DNA was extracted from their saliva, and the mitochondrial tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} gene was amplified using PCR with specified primers. The present study did not find mutations in the tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} gene in Pakistani EH patients. Further studies are needed for confirmation. (*International Journal of Biomedicine*. 2022;12(3):444-449.).

Keywords: essential hypertension • mitochondria • tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} • mutations

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Abbreviations

AQ-seq, accurate quantification by sequencing; **BP**, blood pressure; **EH**, essential hypertension; **LVH**, left ventricular hypertrophy; **LVMI**, left ventricular mass index; **mtDNA**, mitochondrial DNA; **PCR**, polymerase chain reaction; **RAAS**, renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system; **ROS**, reactive oxidative species; **tRNA**, transfer RNA.

Introduction

Hypertension is an established risk factor for coronary heart disease, stroke, heart failure, renal dysfunction, and mortality. Worldwide, nearly 1.4 billion adults have hypertension.⁽¹⁾ Primary or essential hypertension (EH), hypertension due to undetermined causes, accounts for >90% of cases of hypertension. EH is a multifactorial disease involving interactions among genetic, environmental, and demographic

factors.⁽²⁾ It is well established that blood pressure (BP) is a heritable trait with genetic factors contributing about 30%-50% of its variance.^(3,4) Improved techniques of genetic analysis, particularly genome-wide linkage analysis, have enabled the search for genes that contribute to the development of EH in the population.^(5,6) However, most of the reported genetic variants were identified in studies of the nuclear genome;^(6,7) only limited insights have been gained from investigations of the mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA). However, there is evidence to suggest that mitochondria and mtDNA may be important in hypertension. Mitochondria can regulate various aspects of vascular function, thereby being critical for the pathogenesis of hypertension.⁽⁸⁻¹⁰⁾ Increasing evidence suggests that hypertensive myocardial injury is closely related to abnormal

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mitochondrial function, energy metabolism, and homeostasis in cardiomyocytes.^(11,12)

Reactive oxidative species (ROS) produced by mitochondria, as an important intracellular and intercellular regulatory factor, plays a key role in the pathogenesis of EH.⁽¹³⁻¹⁵⁾ ROS can lead to the proliferation and migration of vascular smooth muscle cells and to damage of vascular endothelial cells, leading to vasodilatory dysfunction.⁽¹⁶⁾ ROS is a major factor contributing to oxidative stress in the body. Several animal studies have shown that high BP can be alleviated by inhibiting the generation of mitochondrial ROS, providing clear evidence of the association between hypertension and oxidative stress.⁽¹⁷⁾

With respect to the mtDNA, a hallmark of its involvement is maternal inheritance. Multiple studies have identified strong maternal inheritance of BP,⁽¹⁸⁻²⁰⁾ suggesting that the mutation(s) in mtDNA is involved in the pathogenesis of hypertension.^(10,21-24)

Mitochondrial tRNAs are the hot spots for mutations associated with hypertension.⁽²⁵⁻³⁰⁾ Several hypertension-related tRNA mutations have been reported, including tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} m.3243A>G and m.3253T>C; tRNA^{Gly} m.10003T>C; tRNA^{Glu} m.14692A>G; and tRNA^{Thr} m.15909A>G. These mutations have structural and functional consequences, including the processing of RNA precursors, nucleotide modification, and aminoacylation.⁽³¹⁻³⁴⁾

However, the molecular pathogenesis of hypertension in the Pakistani population remains poorly understood. The major objective of the present work was to investigate mutations in the tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} gene in Pakistani EH patients and compare the amplified sequences to the mitochondrial reference sequence.

Materials and Methods

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Hazara University (Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan). Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

The study included 20 male patients older than age 18 with EH who were enrolled in the cardiac ward at the Swat Medical Complex Hospital. Hypertension was defined as SBP \geq 140mmHg or DBP \geq 90 mmHg, according to the Seventh Report of the Joint National Committee. All patients underwent the following examinations: assessment of traditional risk factors, physical examination, clinical and biochemical laboratory methods, 12-lead ECG, echocardiography, and 24-hour ambulatory blood pressure monitoring. Left ventricular hypertrophy (LVH) defined as LVMI of $>115\text{g}/\text{m}^2$ was detected in all patients.

Exclusion criteria were symptomatic hypertension, valvular heart disease, coronary artery disease, cardiac arrhythmia, diabetes, viral infections, chronic inflammatory and autoimmune diseases, and other co-morbidities

Collection of saliva sample

Before sample collection, the teeth of each patient were brushed, and a 5% sugar solution was given to them. Each

patient received a brief instruction to spit the fluid into the sterile cups after rubbing it on their tongue for three to four minutes. The samples were transported to the Molecular Genetics Laboratory at Hazara University (Mansehra), where the samples were stored at -20°C for further analysis.

Molecular analysis

The whole DNA of buccal cavity epithelial cells was extracted, according to Aidar & Line¹⁶. For checking the quality of extracted DNA, agarose gel (0.5g of agarose dissolved in 29.4ml double distilled water with 600ul of 50X TAE mixture) with 25ul ethidium bromide was used; then, 5 μ l of extracted DNA was dissolved with 2 μ l of loading dye, and the gel was run for 30 minutes at 60V before being photographed under ultraviolet light using the gel documentation system. After that, the DNA was kept at -20°C until it was time to process it.

PCR was used to amplify the desired gene. Initial denaturation was at 95°C for 5 minutes, followed by denaturation at 95°C for 5 minutes, annealing at 50°C for 45 seconds, extension at 72°C for 5 minutes, and final extension at 72°C for 5 minutes; these were the thermal cycling conditions followed for 40 cycles. The final PCR findings were analyzed on a 1% agarose gel. The mixture was then treated with 12ml of ethidium bromide. For cooling, the melted mixture was kept at 25°C . The agarose mixture previously had been put on the gel plate and allowed to solidify. We combined 15ml of PCR product with 2ml of DNA loading blue dye and put it into the agarose gel wells. A 60 Volute was supplied for 30 minutes in an electrophoresis approach until DNA fragments move from left to right. The bands that had been magnified were photographed and inspected under ultraviolet light. To purify the PCR amplification product from an agarose gel, a TIAN gel Midi purification Kit (Cat # DP20902) was used. PCR band including the tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} gene was cut with a sterilized surgical blade and kept in labeled Eppendorf tubes until further processing.

Results

Each saliva sample was used to isolate genomic DNA, and we obtained reliable results from all the samples (Figure 1).

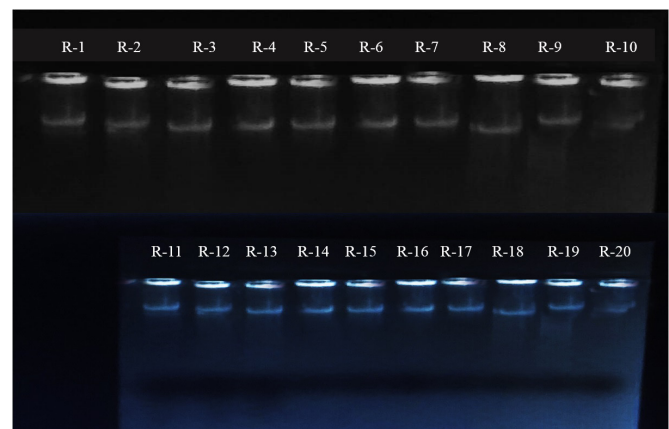


Fig. 1. Total genomic DNA extracted from samples.

Amplification of the tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} gene

PCR was done using the common primer pair (Forward 5'-CAAATTCCTCCCTGTACGAAAGG-3'; Reverse 5'-AATGAGGAGTAGGAGGTTGGCC-3') specific for a region containing tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} gene. Figure 2 shows the amplification of a 279-base-pair fragment.

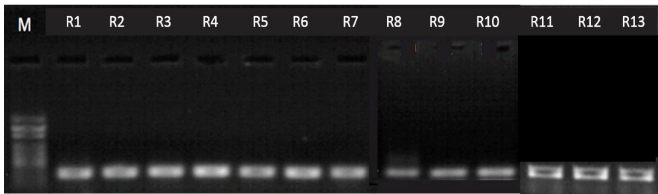


Fig. 2. PCR results of samples (R-1 to R-13). Amplification of a 279 bp fragment. M, molecular size ladder, 1000 bp DNA ladder

Sequencing analysis

Ten eluted DNA samples were sent to Macrogen Inc., Korea, for sequencing. The sequence was aligned with revised Cambridge Reference Sequence (rCRS) accession # NC-012920.1. The alignment was analyzed for mutations in tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} gene.

Sequencing results

No mutations were discovered in any patient's tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} gene. Although there was a two-nucleotide mismatch in the alignment when we studied the chromatogram of this sequencing result, we found that it was a technical error rather than an exact miss-match (Figure 3).

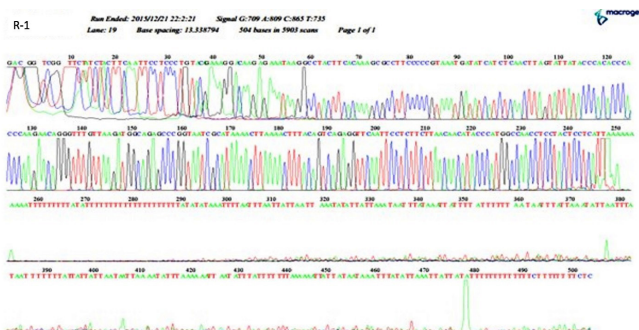


Fig. 3. Chromatogram of the R-1 sample as a sequencing result provided by Macrogen Inc. (South Korea).

The alignment of the patient's AQ-seq data is shown in Figure 4. Herein, we only show one sample of results because there were no mutations discovered in any EH patient's tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} gene.

Discussion

EH is a multifactorial disease arising from the combined action of many genetic, environmental, demographic, vascular, and neuroendocrine factors.⁽³⁵⁻³⁷⁾ EH is likely to be a polygenic disorder that results from the inheritance of a number of

R-1

sequence ID: IcllQuery_65407 Length: 504 Number of Matches: 1

Score	Expect	Identities	Gaps	Strand
433 bits(234)	3e-124	244/248(98%)	4/248(1%)	Plus/Plus
Query 3090	GOTCGGTTTCTATCTACNTTCAAATTCCTCCCTGTAC-GAAAGGACAGAGAAATAAGGC			3148
Subjct 4	GOTCGG-TTCTATCTAC-TTC-AATTCCTCCCTGTACAGAAAGACAGAGAAATAAGGC			60
Query 3149	CTACTTCACAAAGCGCCTTCCCCGTAAATGATATCATCTCAACTTAGTATTATACCCAC			3208
Subjct 61	CTACTTCACAAAGCGCCTTCCCCGTAAATGATATCATCTCAACTTAGTATTATACCCAC			120
Query 3209	ACCCACCAAGAACAGGGTTTAAAGATGGCAGAGCCCGTAATCGCATAAACTTAAA			3268
Subjct 121	ACCCACCAAGAACAGGGTTTAAAGATGGCAGAGCCCGTAATCGCATAAACTTAAA			180
Query 3269	ACTTTCACAGTCAGAGGTTCAATTCCTCTTAAACAATACATCCCATGGCCAACTCTCTAC			3328
Subjct 181	ACTTTCACAGTCAGAGGTTCAATTCCTCTTAAACAATACATCCCATGGCCAACTCTCTAC			240
Query 3329	TCCTCATT 3336			
Subjct 241	TCCTCATT 248			

Fig. 4. The alignment of the R-1 AQ-seq data. The Cambridge reference accession number was used to compare the sequence. The highlighted region indicates the tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} gene.

susceptibility genes. Candidate genes for hypertension include genes involved in regulating the RAAS (*AGT*, *ACE*), genes involved in sodium transport, signal transduction pathway, endothelium functioning.

The inheritance of hypertension has been debated for many years. Cross-sectional analysis has shown a familial aggregation of BP despite environmental factors.^(38,39) The rate of genetic variance associated with EH has been estimated to range from 30% to 50%, and both maternal and paternal patterns of inheritance have been reported.⁽⁴⁰⁻⁴³⁾ Correlations between BP in mothers and their offspring, as well as maternally inherited hypertension, have been reported in several studies.^(42,44) Austin et al.⁽⁴⁵⁾ described a five-generation family with the A8344G mutation in the tRNA^{Lys} gene and 19 affected members with a variant neurologic syndrome of ataxia, myopathy, hearing loss, and neuropathy. Along with axial lipomas and diabetes mellitus, hypertension was a frequent somatic feature, suggesting that mitochondrial mutations may contribute to hypertension in these patients. The mitochondrial genomes of 58 black Americans with hypertension who have progressed to end-stage renal disease (H-ESRD) and 58 normotensive individuals were analyzed in a study by Watson et al.⁽⁴⁶⁾ An A10398G DdeI mutation in the ND3 gene was significantly increased in the H-ESRD cohort, as was an HaeIII T6620C/G6260A double mutation in the CO1 gene.

Previous studies identified mtDNA mutations that are associated with maternally inherited hypertension, including tRNA^{Ile} m.4263A>G, m.4291T>C, m.4295A>G, tRNA^{Met} m.4435A>G, tRNA^{Ala} m.5655A>G, and tRNA^{Met}/tRNA^{Gln} m.4401A>G.^(21,32-34,47-49) Majamaa-Voltti et al.⁽⁵⁰⁾ found that LVH was the most common cardiac abnormality in pedigrees with the 3243A>G mtDNA mutation.

Investigations of mitochondrial genome polymorphism are a fast-growing area of research. Each year, new links between mtDNA mutations and particular human diseases are discovered. It is not surprising that many of the reported mtDNA variants that affect mitochondrial function are associated with cardiovascular diseases because cells of the cardiovascular system are known for their high energy consumption and are significantly dependent on proper mitochondrial activity. Some of these correlations were

discovered to be potent enough to allow for the diagnostic use of mtDNA mutations. Future research will be necessary to turn the knowledge we have collected about mtDNA mutations linked to hypertension into brand-new treatments for hypertension and related conditions. Selective targeting of mitochondrial oxidative stress is one potential avenue for such treatments, and it also appears promising to rectify mitochondrial dynamics.

Conclusion

Recent studies have identified the mitochondria as the target and origin of major pathogenic pathways that lead to the progression of hypertension. Screening for mtDNA mutations in EH patients may provide further insight into the understanding of the pathophysiology of maternally inherited hypertension. However, the present study did not find mutations in the tRNA^{Leu(UUR)} gene in Pakistani EH patients. Further studies are needed for confirmation.

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Data availability statement

The sequences have been uploaded to the National Center for Biotechnology Information using accession numbers: NC-012920.1.

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Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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