Nuclear Maturation, Steroid Metabolism and Lipid Droplets in Porcine Oocytes Cultured with IBMX or dbcAMP

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Summary

We previously reported in porcine oocytes that the activities of some hydroxysteroid dehydrogenases (HSDs) and the size of lipid droplets in the cytoplasm decreased as nuclear maturation progressed, and that the progression of nuclear maturation, the decrease of HSD activities and the reduction in the size of lipid droplets did not occur in those treated with olomoucine. From these results, we suggested that the changes in the steroid metabolism and the size of lipid droplets in the cytoplasm were closely associated with nuclear maturation. However, whether olomoucine directly acts on the cytoplasm to inhibit such changes could not be determined. In the present investigation, the activities of some HSDs and Sudanophilic lipid droplets were histochemically demonstrated in porcine oocytes in which the nuclear maturation was suppressed and the high cAMP level in the cytoplasm was maintained by the treatment of IBMX or dbcAMP, in order to clarify the relationship between nuclear maturation and the metabolism of steroids and the number of lipid droplets in the cytoplasm.

Of the oocytes cultured with IBMX or dbcAMP for 22 hrs, 97 and 100 % were in the germinal vesicle (GV) stage, respectively. The percentages of oocytes in the GV stage were significantly higher in both the treated oocytes than in control oocytes. The rates of the treated oocytes showing the activities of Δ⁴⁻³ β-HSD (using pregnenolone and 17 α-hydroxyprogrenolone as the substrates), 17 β-HSD (estradiol-17 β), 20 α-HSD (20 α-hydroxyprogesterone) and 20 β-HSD (17 β-hydroxyprogesterone) did not differ from those of control oocytes. Also, there were no differences in the number of lipid droplets of different sizes between IBMX- or dbcAMP-treated oocytes and control oocytes.

From these findings, it was suggested that the changes in the steroid metabolism and the size of lipid droplets in the cytoplasm with oocyte maturation depend on the cAMP level in their cytoplasm rather than the progression of nuclear maturation.

Key words : porcine oocyte, cAMP, steroid metabolism, lipid droplet, histochemistry

It is reported that together with the nuclear maturation of oocytes, various changes occur in the cytoplasm. In porcine oocytes, we have reported that the percentages of oocytes showing the activities of Δ⁴⁻³ β-hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase (Δ⁴⁻³ β-HSD) (using DHA as the substrate), 17 β-HSD (testosterone) and 20 β-HSD (20 β-hydroxyprogesterone) did not change during maturation culture, while those showing the activities of Δ⁴⁻³ β-HSD (pregnenolone and 17 α-hydroxyprogrenolone), 17 β-HSD (estradiol-17 β), 20 α-HSD (20 α-hydroxyprogesterone) and 20 β-HSD (17 β-hydroxyprogesterone) decreased as nuclear maturation progressed (Takano and Niimura, 2002). We have also reported that the number of large lipid droplets decreased remarkably, while the number of small and medium ones increased in porcine oocytes as the nuclear maturation progressed (Niimura et al., 2002). Furthermore, we have observed the activities of HSDs and the number of lipid droplets in porcine oocytes treated with 2-(2-hydroxyethylamino)-6-benzylamino-9-methylpurine (olomoucine), which was known to be an inhibitor of the activity of p34cdc2, a cyclin dependent kinase of MPF (Vesely et al., 1994; Abraham et al., 1995), in order to determine the relationship between nuclear maturation and changes in the steroid metabolism and the number of lipid droplets in the cytoplasm. The resumption of nuclear maturation was completely inhibited in olomoucine-treated oocytes, and the decrease of the activities of HSDs and the reduction in the size of lipid droplets were also inhibited (Niimura et al., 2002; Takano and Niimura, 2002). From these findings, we suggested that the changes in the metabolism of some steroids and the size of lipid droplets in the cytoplasm are closely associated with nuclear maturation (Niimura et al., 2002; Takano and Niimura, 2002). However, whether olomoucine directly acts on the cytoplasm to inhibit such changes in steroid metabolism and size of lipid droplets could not be determined.

It is generally known that cAMP synthesized in cumulus cells by the stimulation of LH flows into the cytoplasm of oocytes through gap junctions between cumulus cells and oocytes, and plays some important roles in oocyte maturation (Pető et al., 1991; Mattioli et al., 1994; Funahashi et al., 1997; Shimada and Terada, 2002; Shimada et al., 2002). Recently, we have reported that the amount of cAMP in porcine cumulus-

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ooocyte complexes (COCs) cultured for 22 hrs with olomoucine is significantly smaller than control COCs cultured without olomoucine, and suggested that the synthesis of CAMP in cumulus cells and the transfer of CAMP from cumulus cells to oocytes are inhibited by the treatment of olomoucine (Takano and Niimura, 2004). Therefore, the reason for no changes in steroid metabolism and the size of lipid droplets in oocytes treated with olomoucine is thought to be the low CAMP level in their cytoplasm. However, the steroid metabolism and the size of lipid droplets in oocytes in which resumption of meiotic division was inhibited and the high CAMP level in the cytoplasm was maintained have not yet been determined.

On the other hand, 3-isobutyl-1-methylxanthine (IBMX) is known to be an inhibitor of CAMP phosphodiesterase, which metabolizes CAMP to 5’-AMP, and has the effect to maintain CAMP at a higher level in the cytoplasm (Shimada et al., 2002; Fan et al., 2002). It has been confirmed that maintaining the CAMP at a higher level by IBMX treatment results in the suppression of resumption of maturation division in mammalian oocytes (Magnusson and Hillensjö, 1977; Biolade et al., 1993; Tsafiriri et al., 1996; Sun et al., 1999; Hegele-Hartung et al., 2001). In addition, when CAMP level in the cytoplasm was maintained at a higher level in oocytes treated with dibutyryl CAMP (dbcAMP), an analogue of CAMP, the rates of oocytes whose germinal vesicles (GVs) had broken down significantly decreased (Petr et al., 1991; Mattioli et al., 1994; Funahashi et al., 1997).

In the present investigation, the activities of HSDs and the number of Sudanophilic lipid droplets were histochemically observed in porcine oocytes treated with IBMX or dbcAMP, which suppresses the nuclear maturation with the mechanism different from olomoucine, in order to clarify the roles of CAMP in the metabolism of steroids and the number of lipid droplets, and the relationship between nuclear maturation and the metabolism of steroids and the number of lipid droplets in the cytoplasm.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Collection and culture of COCs**

Ovaries were obtained from prepubertal gilts at a local slaughterhouse and transported to the laboratory in 0.9 % NaCl solution maintained at 37 °C. The ovaries were washed in 0.9 % NaCl solution containing 200 i.u./ml potassium penicillin G. COCs were aspirated from medium-sized follicles (3-6 mm in diameter) with a 21-gauge needle fixed to a 10-ml disposable syringe. Collected COCs were washed in PBS (pH 7.4) (Dulbecco and Vogt, 1954) and then in a culture medium composed of TCM-199 (Gibco BRL, NY, USA) supplemented with 10 % (v/v) porcine follicular fluid, 10 % (v/v) fetal calf serum (FCS; Gibco BRL), 10 i.u./ml eCG (PEAMEX; Sankyo Yell Yakuhin Co. Ltd, Tokyo, Japan), 10 i.u./ml hCG (Gonatropin; Teikoku Hormone Manufacturing Co. Ltd, Tokyo, Japan) and 0.001 % (w/v) estradiol-17 β (Wako Pure Chemical Industries, Osaka, Japan) (Yoshida et al., 1990). These COCs were cultured for 22 hrs at 39 °C in the culture medium containing 500 μM IBMX (Sigma Chemical Co. MO, USA) or 2.0 mM dbcAMP (Sigma Chemical Co). IBMX was previously dissolved in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) and then diluted with the culture medium up to 500 μM. The concentration of DMSO in the culture medium was adjusted to 0.1 % (v/v), and COCs cultured for 22 hrs in the medium containing DMSO at 0.1 % or in the medium with no dbcAMP were used as controls.

After culture, cumulus cells were dispersed from the oocytes by pipetting in PBS containing 0.1 % hyaluronidase (Sigma Chemical Co).

**Observation of nuclear maturation**

In order to investigate nuclei, the denuded oocytes were fixed in 25 % (v/v) acetic acid in ethanol for 48 hrs at room temperature. The fixed oocytes were stained with 1.0 % aceto-orcin and examined for evidence of nuclear maturation under a light microscope.

To determine the viability of oocytes treated with IBMX or dbcAMP, progression of nuclear maturation was also observed in those further cultured for 22 hrs in the medium without IBMX and dbcAMP.

**Observation of HSD activities and Sudanophilic lipids**

In order to detect the activities of HSDs shown in Table 1, the method used by Niimura and Ishida (1976) was employed: the denuded oocytes were placed at 37 °C in a solution containing 1.8 mg substrate (Sigma Chemical Co) which had been dissolved in 0.5 ml acetone or dimethylformamide. 4.0 mg cofactor (Sigma Chemical Co), 2.0 mg nitroblue tetrazolium salt (Sigma Chemical Co), and 10.0 ml 0.1 M phosphate buffer solution (pH 7.5). Oocytes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. HSDs investigated, and substrates, solvents and cofactors used for their histochemical analyses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HSDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δ⁵-3 β-HSD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 β-HSD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 α-HSD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 β-HSD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NAD: Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide, NADP: nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate.
Table 2. Nuclei of porcine oocytes cultured with IBMX or dbcAMP

| Treatments | No. of oocytes examined | Germinal vesicle | ≤ Diakinesis | No. and (%) of oocytes at the stages of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Diakinesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3 ( 3)</td>
<td>87 (97) a</td>
<td>14 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBMX</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>72 (97) a</td>
<td>2 (3) b</td>
<td>2 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>10 (22) b</td>
<td>36 (78) a</td>
<td>14 (39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dbcAMP</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57 (100) a</td>
<td>0 (0) b</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The oocytes were observed after 22 hrs of culture. Values with different superscripts in the same column in each experimental lot are significantly different (P<0.05).

RESULTS

Nuclear maturation

Nuclear maturation in porcine oocytes treated with IBMX or dbcAMP is shown in Table 2. Of oocytes cultured for 22 hrs in the IBMX-free medium and in the dbcAMP-free medium, 3 (3/90) and 22 % (10/46) were in the GV stage, respectively, and the remaining 97 and 78 % were in the diakinesis to metaphase II (M II ) stages, mostly in the M I stage (72 and 61 %). On the other hand, almost all nuclei of the oocytes treated with IBMX or dbcAMP were in the GV stage (97 and 100 %). The percentages of oocytes in the GV stage were significantly higher in both the treated oocytes than in control oocytes (P<0.05). Therefore, it is confirmed that treatments of IBMX and dbcAMP are able to inhibit the resumption of nuclear maturation in porcine oocytes.

When the oocytes treated with IBMX or dbcAMP were further cultured for 22 hrs in the medium without IBMX and dbcAMP, most nuclei were in the M II stage (90 and 76 %), suggesting that the ability of maturation in both IBMX-treated and dbcAMP-treated oocytes was sustained.

Activities of HSDs

When porcine oocytes cultured for 22 hrs were immersed in a substrate solution, diformazan granules were found to be deposited in the cytoplasm, as in our previous report (Takano and Niimura, 2002). Since such granules were not observed in the oocytes immersed in a solution containing no substrate (negative control), the granules were confirmed to represent the activity of HSDs. Using the method of Barka and Anderson (1965) for the demonstration of NADH-DH and NADPH-DH, diformazan granules were deposited in the cytoplasm of every oocyte. These granules did not appear in the negative control oocyte.

The activities of Δ^3-3 β-HSD (pregnenolone and 17 a-hydroxyprogrenolone), 17 β-HSD (estradiol-17 β), 20 a -HSD (20 a -hydroxyprogesterone) and 20 β-HSD (17 a -hydroxyprogesterone) in porcine oocytes treated with IBMX or dbcAMP are shown in Table 3.

The percentages of the treated oocytes showing the activities of such HSDs did not differ from those of control oocytes cultured in the medium without IBMX and dbcAMP.
Table 3. The activities of HSDs in porcine oocytes cultured with IBMX or dbcAMP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatments</th>
<th>Pregnenolone (^1)</th>
<th>17 (\alpha)-Hydroxy-pregnenolone (^1)</th>
<th>17 (\beta)-HSD</th>
<th>20 (\alpha)-Hydroxyprogesterone (^1)</th>
<th>20 (\beta)-Hydroxyprogesterone (^1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>9(10)*</td>
<td>2(2)*</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>87(90)*</td>
<td>2(2)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBMX</td>
<td>7(12)*</td>
<td>51(88)*</td>
<td>2(3)*</td>
<td>53(85)*</td>
<td>3(5)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0(0)*</td>
<td>71(100)*</td>
<td>0(0)*</td>
<td>73(100)*</td>
<td>9(13)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dbcAMP</td>
<td>2(3)*</td>
<td>63(100)*</td>
<td>0(0)*</td>
<td>72(95)*</td>
<td>2(3)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The number of oocytes with percentages in parentheses. Values with different superscripts in the same column in each experimental lot are significantly different \((P < 0.05)\).

Table 4. The number of Sudanophilic lipid droplets of different sizes in porcine oocytes cultured with IBMX or dbcAMP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatments</th>
<th>No. of oocytes examined</th>
<th>No. of lipid droplets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Small (\leq 2.5 \mu m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBMX</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dbcAMP</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

++ represents many. Data show mean ± S.E.

Values with different superscripts in the same column in each experimental lot are significantly different \((P < 0.05)\).

Number of Sudanophilic lipids

Sudanophilic lipids were observed as reddish-orange droplets of different sizes in the cytoplasm when porcine oocytes cultured for 22 hrs were stained with Sudan IV, as in our previous report (Niimura et al., 2002). As shown in Table 4, the oocytes treated with IBMX or dbcAMP had many small and medium Sudanophilic lipid droplets, and 47±3.76 and 51±3.87 large ones, respectively. The control oocytes had also many small and medium lipid droplets, and 55±4.64 and 62±4.64 large ones, respectively. The amount and number of lipid droplets of different sizes in the treated oocytes did not differ from those in control oocytes.

DISCUSSION

As previously mentioned, we have observed in porcine oocytes that the metabolic abilities of progesterone, 17 \(\alpha\)-hydroxyprogesterone, 20 \(\alpha\)-hydroxyprogesterone, 17 \(\alpha\) 20 \(\beta\)-dihydroxyprogesterone and estradiol-17 \(\beta\), and the size of Sudanophilic lipid droplets decrease as the nuclear maturation progresses (Niimura et al., 2002; Takano and Niimura, 2002). We have also observed the metabolism of such steroids and the number of lipid droplets in porcine oocytes treated with olomoucine, in order to determine the relationship between nuclear maturation and changes in the steroid metabolism and the number of lipid droplets in the cytoplasm. The resumption of nuclear maturation was completely inhibited in olomoucine-treated oocytes, and the decrease in the steroid metabolism and the reduction in the size of lipid droplets were also inhibited in those treated with olomoucine (Niimura et al., 2002; Takano and Niimura, 2002). From these results, we suggested that these changes in the cytoplasm are associated with progression of nuclear maturation. However, whether olomoucine directly acts on the cytoplasm to inhibit such changes could not be determined. On the other hand, we have recently reported that the resumption of nuclear maturation is completely inhibited in porcine oocytes treated with IBMX or dbcAMP, whereas the movement of cortical granules to the cytoplasm immediately beneath the plasma membrane is not inhibited (Takano and Niimura, 2008). Furthermore, we have also observed that the amount of cAMP is significantly smaller in porcine COCs treated with olomoucine than in control COCs, and suggested that the synthesis of cAMP in cumulus cells is inhibited and the transfer of cAMP from cumulus cells to oocytes does not occur by the treatment of olomoucine.
(Takano and Niimura, 2004). Therefore, the reason for no changes in steroid metabolism and the size of lipid droplets in oocytes treated with olomoucine is thought to be the low cAMP level in their cytoplasm. However, the steroid metabolism and the size of lipid droplets in oocytes in which resumption of meiotic division was inhibited and the high cAMP level in the cytoplasm was maintained have not yet been determined.

In the present investigation, we attempted to observe the activities of some HSDs and the number of Sudanophilic lipid droplets, using oocytes treated with IBMX or dbcAMP, which suppresses the nuclear maturation with the mechanism different from olomoucine, in order to clarify the roles of cAMP in the metabolism of steroids and the number of lipid droplets. As a result, the resumption of nuclear maturation did not occur in the treated oocytes, and the activities of HSDs and the number of lipid droplets in the treated oocytes did not differ from those of control oocytes. From these results, it was suggested that the changes in the steroid metabolism and the size of lipid droplets in the cytoplasm with oocyte maturation depend on the cAMP level in their cytoplasm rather than the progression of nuclear maturation, and that the reason for no changes in the cytoplasm of olomoucine-treated oocytes is the low cAMP level in their cytoplasm. Also, the higher cAMP level in the cytoplasm is thought to be related to not only inhibition of nuclear maturation but also progression of cytoplasmic maturation, and the cAMP level is considered to be the important factor for cytoplasmic maturation of oocytes. It is generally known that cAMP plays a role as a second messenger to hormone actions in the steroidogenesis of luteal cells (Marsh et al., 1966; Marsh, 1971; Rao, 1973; Herlitz et al., 1974) and in the lipolysis of fat cells (Brasemel et al., 2000; Morimoto et al., 2001), respectively. Therefore, it was considered that higher cAMP level in the cytoplasm of treated oocytes is also involved in the steroidogenesis and the lipolysis in their cytoplasm.

REFERENCES


IBMX および dbcAMP で処置したブタ卵母細胞における核の成熟、ステロイド代謝および脂質小滴の数

高野裕子1・新村末雄2*
（平成20年8月3日受付）

要 約
我々は、ブタ卵母細胞において、核の成熟に伴って細胞質ではいくつかのステロイドの代謝低下と脂質小滴の小型化が起こることを前報告した。また、核の成熟をオロモウシンで処置して阻止した卵母細胞では、ステロイド代謝の低下および脂質小滴の小型化はみられなかったことから、細胞質でのこれらの変化は核の成熟と密接に関連していることを推察して報告した。しかし、オロモウシンがステロイド代謝の低下および脂質小滴の小型化に直接関与しているのか否かは明らかにできなかった。そこで、オロモウシンとは異なった機構、すなわち細胞質のcAMPレベルを高く維持することによって核の成熟を抑制する作用のあるIBMXとdbcAMPを用いて、ブタの卵母細胞を処置し、ステロイド代謝と脂質小滴の数を組織化学的に観察した。

IBMXあるいはdbcAMPで22時間処置した卵母細胞において、核は97%および100%で卵核期にあり、これらの処置により成熟分裂の再開が抑制されていることが確認された。一方、IBMXあるいはdbcAMPで22時間処置した卵母細胞において、Δ3-3γ-HSD活性（基質としてpregnenoloneと17α-hydroxypregnenoloneを使用）、17β-HSD活性（estradiol-17β）、20α-HSD活性（20α-hydroxyprogesterone）および20β-HSD活性（17β-hydroxyprogesterone）を有するものの割合、ならびに各種大きな脂質小滴の数は、どちらも対照の卵母細胞におけるそれらと相違なかった。

以上の結果から、細胞質におけるステロイド代謝の低下および脂質小滴の小型化は、核の成熟の進行よりも、細胞質のcAMPの量に依存して起こることが推察された。

キーワード：ブタ卵母細胞、cAMP、ステロイド代謝、脂質小滴、組織化学

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