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S. Chiewchankoljuk

S. Lalitanantpong

M. Chipipat

V. Wattanasirmkit

S. Shuangshoti

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Ki-67 labeling index, hormonal status, and invasiveness of pituitary adenomas: A clinicopathological study

Sompong Chiewchankoljuk*

Siriporn Lalitanantpong** Mookda Chipipat ***

Vanee Wattanasirmit *** Shanop Shuangshoti ***

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- Background** : *Conventional histopathology has proven not a reliable measurement for the behavior of pituitary adenomas. Although most of earlier studies reported that Ki-67 labeling index (LI) is associated with the invasiveness of pituitary tumors, few have failed to replicate such finding.*
- Objective** : *To evaluate the relationship between Ki-67 LI, hormonal status, and the invasiveness of pituitary adenomas.*
- Setting** : *King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital*
- Research Design** : *Descriptive study.*
- Patients** : *Fifty-three pituitary adenoma patients operated at King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital between the years 2001-2003.*
- Methods** : *All adenomas were immunostained with adenohipophyseal hormones and Ki-67. Ki-67 LI was recorded for being high ($\geq 3\%$ positive tumor cells) or low ($< 3\%$). The invasiveness of tumor was defined by the radiological criteria. Chi-square test was used to evaluate the relation between Ki-67 LI, hormonal status, and the invasiveness of pituitary adenomas.*

* Division of Neurosurgery, Department of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University

** Department of Radiology, Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University

***Department of Pathology, Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University

Results : *The two most common adenomas were null cell (47 %) and corticotroph cell (13 %) adenomas. Of the 53 adenomas, 45 % were functioning. Thirty-five cases (66 %) were invasive; and 52 % of the invasive tumors were non-functioning. The most common invasive functioning adenomas were corticotroph cell and somatotroph cell adenomas (5/24 cases each) whereas the null cell adenoma was accounted for the most common invasive non-functioning tumors (17/29). Regarding the 35 invasive and 18 non-invasive adenomas, 11 and 3 cases showed high Ki-67 LI respectively. No statistically significant association was found either between the functional status or the Ki-67 LI and the invasiveness of pituitary adenoma.*

Conclusion : *The invasiveness of pituitary adenomas has not been found associated with Ki-67 LI or hormonal status in the present study.*

Keywords : *Pituitary adenoma, Invasiveness, Ki-67.*

Reprint request : Shuangshoti S. Department of Pathology, Faculty of Medicine,
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok 10330, Thailand.

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สมพงษ์ เชี่ยวชาญกุลจักร์, ศิริพร ลลิตอนันตพงศ์, มุกดา ชัยพิพัฒน์, วรณี วัฒนเสริมกิจ, ชนพ ช่วงโชติ. ดัชนีการติดตามกลไกไอ-67, สภาวะฮอร์โมน, และการแทรกแซงของเนื้องอกต่อมใต้สมองส่วนหน้า: การศึกษาพยาธิวิทยาและคลินิก. จุฬาลงกรณ์เวชสาร 2547 ๓.๓; 48(12): 781 - 8

- เหตุผลในการศึกษา** : เป็นที่ทราบกันว่าการตรวจทางพยาธิวิทยาด้วยวิธีธรรมดาไม่สามารถทำนายถึงพฤติกรรมของเนื้องอกต่อมใต้สมองส่วนหน้าได้ แม้ว่าจากการศึกษาหลายอันพบว่าดัชนีการติดตามกลไกไอ-67 จะช่วยบ่งบอกถึงการแทรกแซงของเนื้องอกต่อมใต้สมอง การศึกษาบางอันก็ไม่ได้สนับสนุนข้อมูลดังกล่าว
- วัตถุประสงค์** : เพื่อศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างการติดตามกลไกไอ-67, สภาวะฮอร์โมน, และการแทรกแซงของเนื้องอกต่อมใต้สมองส่วนหน้า
- สถานที่ทำการศึกษา** : โรงพยาบาลจุฬาลงกรณ์
- รูปแบบการวิจัย** : การศึกษาเชิงพรรณนา
- ผู้ป่วยที่ได้ทำการศึกษา** : ผู้ป่วยที่เป็นเนื้องอกต่อมใต้สมองส่วนหน้า จำนวน 53 รายที่ได้ทำการผ่าตัดที่โรงพยาบาลจุฬาลงกรณ์ ระหว่างปี พ.ศ. 2544 ถึง 2546
- วิธีการทำวิจัย** : ได้ทำการย้อมพิเศษเพื่อตรวจหาฮอร์โมนและไอ-67 ในเนื้องอกต่อมใต้สมองส่วนหน้า เนื้องอกที่มีดัชนีการติดตามกลไกไอ-67 สูงคือเนื้องอกที่มีการย้อมติดไอ-67 มากกว่าร้อยละ 3 ของเซลล์เนื้องอก การแทรกแซงของเนื้องอกได้จัดจำแนกตามเกณฑ์ทางรังสีวิทยา ใช้การทดสอบ chi-square เพื่อศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างดัชนีการติดตามกลไกไอ-67, สภาวะฮอร์โมน และการแทรกแซงของเนื้องอกต่อมใต้สมองส่วนหน้า
- ผลการศึกษา** : เนื้องอกต่อมใต้สมองส่วนหน้าสองชนิดที่พบบ่อยคือเนื้องอกเซลล์ null (ร้อยละ 47) และเนื้องอกเซลล์ corticotroph (ร้อยละ 13) ร้อยละ 45 ของเนื้องอกมีอาการแสดงทางฮอร์โมน เนื้องอก 35 ราย (ร้อยละ 66) พบว่ามีการแทรกแซงและในกลุ่มนี้ร้อยละ 52 ไม่มีอาการแสดงทางฮอร์โมน เนื้องอกที่มีการแสดงทางฮอร์โมนและมีการแทรกแซงที่พบบ่อยคือเนื้องอกเซลล์ corticotroph และเนื้องอกเซลล์ somatotroph (พบอย่างละ 5 ใน 24 ราย) ในขณะที่เนื้องอกเซลล์ null เป็นเนื้องอกที่พบบ่อยที่สุดในกลุ่มที่ไม่มีอาการแสดงทางฮอร์โมนและมีการแทรกแซง (17/29) เนื้องอก 11 รายใน 35 รายที่มีการแทรกแซงและเนื้องอก 3 รายใน 18 รายที่ไม่มีอาการแทรกแซงพบว่ามีดัชนีการติดตามกลไกไอ-67 สูง ไม่พบนัยสำคัญทางสถิติระหว่างอาการแสดงทางฮอร์โมนหรือดัชนีการติดตามกลไกไอ-67 กับการแทรกแซงของเนื้องอกต่อมใต้สมองส่วนหน้า

สรุป : ไม่พบความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างการแทรกแซงของเนื้องอกต่อมได้สมอง
ส่วนหน้า, ดัชนีการติดฉลากเคไอ-67 และสถานะฮอร์โมน ในการศึกษา
ครั้งนี้

คำสำคัญ : เนื้องอกต่อมได้สมองส่วนหน้า, การแทรกแซง, เคไอ-67

Although histologically benign, some pituitary adenomas are capable of aggressive growth pattern, with local invasion, and rarely metastasis (in case of pituitary carcinoma). These differences in tumor behavior determine both the prognosis and treatment modalities. Since the conventional histopathological examination cannot offer a reliable measurement of the aggressiveness of pituitary adenomas, several ancillary techniques have been applied.⁽¹⁾ Among the available methods of growth fraction determination, Ki-67 has been shown in several tumors to correlate with the proliferating activity, invasiveness, and, in some instances, the prognosis.⁽¹⁾ Being selectively and transiently expressed only in the nuclei of cells engaged in the G₁, synthesis, G₂ and mitotic phases of all cell cycle, the nuclear labeling of Ki-67 protein discriminates proliferating cells from quiescent cells.⁽²⁾

Although earlier studies have demonstrated a positive association between the Ki-67 labeling index (LI) and invasiveness of pituitary adenomas^(1,3-5), one

study failed to recognize the relationship.⁽⁶⁾ The objective of this present study was to re-evaluate Ki-67 LI and invasive behavior of pituitary adenomas. The association between hormonal status and aggressive behavior of the tumor was also determined.

Materials and Methods

Tumor specimens and hormonal study

Tumor specimens were obtained from 53 patients, including 26 men and 27 women, operated at King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital during the years 2001-2003. All specimens were fixed in 10 % formalin, routinely processed and embedded in paraffin wax. For routine microscopic examination, sections were stained with hematoxylin and eosin. Localization of the adenohypophyseal hormones was performed using standard indirect immunohistochemical technique previously described.⁽⁷⁾ Pituitary glands from routine autopsies were used as positive control. Negative controls were obtained by substituting normal rabbit serum for the primary antibodies.

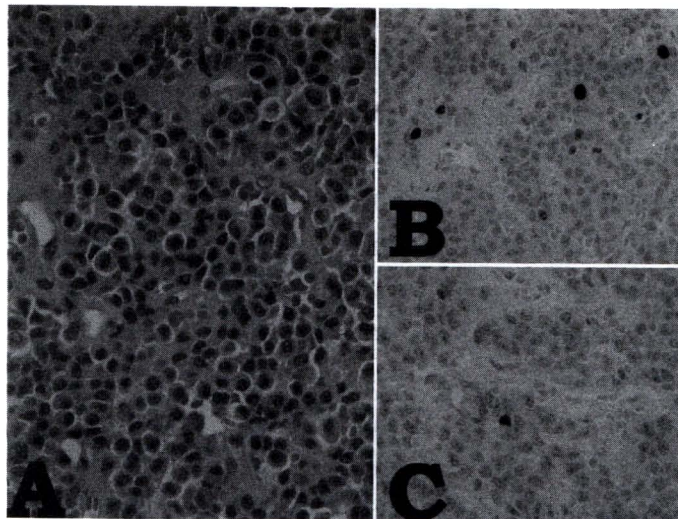


Figure 1. Hematoxylin and eosin section (A) demonstrates sheets of round adenoma cells intervened by delicate fibrovascular septa. Pituitary adenomas with high (B) and low (C) Ki-67 labeling index are shown.

Determination of Ki-67 labeling index (LI)

All cases were immunostained with Ki-67 (Dako, dilution 1:300) using standard indirect immunohistochemical method. In each specimen, the most actively proliferating area was selected; approximately 200 tumor nuclei were counted, and percentage of Ki-67 LI calculated. We used the cut-off point of $\geq 3\%$ (high Ki-67 LI) and $< 3\%$ (low Ki-67 LI) to define 2 subgroups of pituitary adenoma (Figure 1).⁽¹⁾ Ki-67 LI in all cases was examined by one of the investigators (Dr. Shuangshoti), but being blinded from the knowledge of the radiological findings (see below).

Invasiveness of pituitary adenomas

Invasiveness of all adenomas was defined by radiological criteria using Hardy classification.⁽⁶⁾

All cases were interpreted by one of the investigators (Dr.Lalitanantpong), without knowledge of the Ki-67 LI.

Statistical analysis

Chi-square test was used to evaluate the relation between Ki-67 LI, hormonal status and the invasiveness of pituitary adenomas.

Results

The three most common pituitary adenomas, as defined by hormonal subtypes, were null cell (47%), ACTH (adrenocorticotrophic hormone) cell (17%) and GH (growth hormone) cell (13%) adenomas. Of the 53 pituitary adenomas (Table 1), 24 cases (45%) were functioning. The most frequent functioning adenomas were ACTH-producing tumors. According to the radiological parameters, 35 cases (66%) were

Table 1. Hormonal status and invasiveness of pituitary adenomas.

	Non-invasive	Invasive	Total	
			N	%
Functioning pituitary adenomas				
PRL cell adenoma	1	2	3	6
GH cell adenoma	2	5	7	13
GH-PRL cell adenoma	0	4	4	7
TSH cell adenoma	0	1	1	2
ACTH cell adenoma	4	5	9	17
Total functioning adenomas	7	17	24	45
Non-functioning adenomas				
FSH/LH cell adenoma	3	1	4	8
Null cell adenoma	8	17	25	47
Total non functioning adenomas	11	18	29	55
Total pituitary adenomas	18	35	53	100

PRL = Prolactin, GH = Growth hormone, TSH = Thyrotrophin-stimulating hormone, ACTH = Adrenocorticotrophic hormone, FSH = Follicle stimulating hormone, LH = Luteinizing hormone

invasive. Of the invasive tumors (Table 2), 18 cases (52 %) were non-functioning. The most common invasive functioning adenomas were ACTH cell (5/24) and GH cell (5/24) adenomas. Null cell adenomas were accounted for 58 % (17/29 cases) of the invasive non-functioning tumor (Table 1). The invasive behavior of pituitary adenomas was not related with the hormonal function ($P = 0.5$). Of the invasive and non-invasive pituitary adenomas (Table 3), 11 and 3 cases, respectively, had high Ki-67 LI. No positive association was observed between the different Ki-67 LI and the invasiveness of pituitary adenomas ($P = 0.2$).

Discussion

Pituitary adenoma is the most frequent neoplasm of the sellar region. At King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital, from August 2001 to February 2004, it constituted 16 % (94 cases) of all intracranial tumors (577 cases) and was responsible for 67 % of

neoplasms arising in the sellar and suprasellar regions (unpublished data). Compared to an earlier hormonal immunohistochemical analysis at the same institute by Kasantikul and Shuangshoti in 1990⁽⁷⁾, there is a remarkable decrease in the incidence of prolactinoma. This is most likely due to an increasing use of bromocriptine treatment without surgery.

The biological basis of invasiveness of pituitary adenomas remains obscure. Like other endocrine neoplasms, it has been well-documented that routine morphological markers such as nuclear pleomorphism and high mitotic activity are of limited usefulness in the assessment of the invasive tendency, growth rate, and the potential of recurrence or metastasis in pituitary adenomas. In consistent with a recent study⁽⁹⁾, no relationship between the functional status of pituitary adenomas was found in our current series. Recently, a few groups of investigators have reported their experience in evaluating pituitary adenoma growth fraction based on the expression of Ki-67 antigen. Even

Table 2. Invasiveness of functioning and non-functioning pituitary adenomas (chi-square test, $P=0.5$).

	Invasive	Non-invasive	Total
Functioning adenomas	17	7	24
Non-functioning adenomas	18	11	29
Total	35	18	53

Table 3. Ki-67 labeling index (LI) and invasiveness of pituitary adenomas (chi-square test, $P=0.2$).

Ki-67 LI	Invasive	Non-invasive	Total
High	11	3	14
Low	24	15	39
Total	35	18	53

though the majority reported a positive correlation between the higher percentage of Ki-67 LI and the invasiveness of pituitary adenomas^(1-4,10), in line with the study by Lath R *et al*⁽⁶⁾, we were unable to demonstrate such association in our current analysis. Differences in counting procedures may have caused these discrepancies. Certainly, rigorous methods such as using image analysis would be better than manual counting. However, shortage of equipment and technical personnel makes it unsuitable for most pathology laboratories in Thailand.

In conclusion, the invasiveness of pituitary adenomas has not been found associated with Ki-67 LI in our present study. The role of other biological markers such as telomerase activity and the invasive behavior of pituitary adenomas should be further explored.

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