**BACKGROUND**

Numerous published studies have reported the Relative Biological Effectiveness (RBE) values for chromosome aberrations induced by charged particles of different LET. The RBE for chromosome aberrations in human lymphocytes exposed ex vivo has been suggested to show a similar relationship as the quality factor for cancer induction. Therefore, increased chromosome aberrations in the astronauts’ white blood cells post-long duration missions are used to determine the biological doses from exposures to space radiation. However, the RBE value is known to be very different for different types of cancer. Previously, we reported that, even though the RBE for initial chromosome damages was high in human lymphocytes exposed to Fe ions, the RBE was significantly reduced after multiple cell divisions post irradiation. To test the hypothesis that RBE values for chromosome aberrations are cell type dependent, and different between early and late damages, we exposed human lymphocytes ex vivo, and human mammary epithelial cells in vitro to various charged particles. Chromosome aberrations were quantified using the samples collected at first mitosis post irradiation for initial damages, and the samples collected after multiple generations for the remaining or late arising aberrations. Results of the study suggested that the effectiveness of high-LET charged particles for late chromosome aberrations may be cell type dependent, even though the RBE values are similar for early damages.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Peripheral whole blood was collected from two healthy donors in vacutainer cell tubes containing sodium citrate. Peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) were immediately separated by centrifugation, washed twice with PBS, counted and resuspended in RPMI1640/2mM Glutamine/10%FBS. Human mammary epithelial cells (CH184B5F5/M10) were cultured to confluence in DMEM medium with supplement of 10%FBS. Cells were exposed in vitro to Fe ions or protons (600MeV/nucleon) at NASA Space Radiation Laboratory (NSRL) at Brookhaven National Laboratory. In another experiment, primary PBMCs were exposed to 600 MeV/u Fe ions and 290 MeV/u Carbon ions at HIMAC, Chiba, Japan. PBMCs were also exposed to γ-rays acutely using a Cs source at NASA.

After exposure, PBMCs were stimulated to grow in medium containing 1% Phytohemagglutinin (PHA) and the epithelial cells were subcultured continually to enable growth. Chromosomes were collected within the first cell cycle post irradiation and after multiple cell doublings using Calfcin-A.

Chromosomal aberrations were analyzed using fluorescent in situ hybridization (FISH) with whole chromosome probes for chromosomes 1 and 6 (MetaSystems). In addition, chromosome 3 was painted with the XCyte5 mBAND kit (MetaSystems) which distinguishes the chromosome in 23 different color bands.

**RESULTS**

1. **Cell growth of irradiated lymphocytes and epithelial cells**

   Cell samples collected at 8-13 days post Fe ion and proton irradiation were used to analyze chromosome aberrations in lymphocytes and epithelial cells using FISH technique (mostly at 5-7 doublings post irradiation). Lymphocytes were also analyzed at 7 and 14 days post Fe ion and γ-irradiation using mBAND technique at the similar doublings of the cell population.

2. **Fractions of cells containing initial or late chromosomal aberrations induced by Fe ions or Protons**

   At multiple cell doublings post Fe ion-irradiation, only a small fraction of cells contained aberrations (~10% of the initial fraction). In comparison, a significantly greater fraction of epithelial cells contained late aberrations (~50% of the initial fraction). For low-LET protons, 40-50% of the cells containing initial damages remained after multiple cell divisions for both cell types.

3. **Fractions of lymphocytes containing different number of radiation-induced chromosome breaks**

   The number of chromosome breaks on chromosome 3 and 6 were evaluated to quantify the severity of radiation at 5-7 days damages. Most severely damaged cells (containing 4 or more breaks) were eliminated in later generations, resulting in a low yield of late aberrations for Fe ions. Compared to protons, Fe ions induced more severe chromosome aberrations initially. More than 15% of the damaged cells contained 4+ breaks after Fe ion irradiation.

**CONCLUSIONS**

- For low-LET radiation, a significant fraction of the initially damaged cells survived after multiple cell divisions, regardless of the cell types. However, the fraction of survival cells with initial chromosome damages induced by high-LET Fe ions appeared to be cell type dependent. The fraction was low for primary human lymphocytes, but significantly higher for the CH184B5F5/M10 human epithelial cells.

- The cells that didn’t survive after multiple generations usually contained chromosome aberrations involving a large number of chromosome breaks.

- Due to the difference in the fraction of surviving cells after high-LET radiation exposure, the RBE for late chromosome aberrations can be different for different cell types, even though the RBE values are similar for early damages. Such a difference may explain the different RBE values for late effects such as cancer induction between different organs.