Ling Zhi-8: A Fungal Protein With Immunomodulatory Effects


Ling Zhi-8 (LZ-8) is a protein from the mycelial extracts of Ganoderma lucidum and has immunomodulatory capacities. Formerly it was reported to be mitogenic toward mouse splenocytes and suppressive in vivo by reducing HBsAg-specific antibody production and by preventing the incidence of diabetes in NOD mice. To specify possible clinical use of LZ-8, the mitogenic effects of LZ-8 were tested in the presence of human mononuclear cells (MNC) and T lymphocytes, as well as suppressive capacities of LZ-8 in vitro in an MLC with MNC or T lymphocytes and Epstein-Barr Virus-transformed (EBV) B cells. The immunosuppressive effects of LZ-8 were also investigated in a model of allogeneic mouse skin transplantation and in a model of allografted rat pancreatic islets.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Mitogenic Activity of LZ-8
Human MNC or purified T cells were incubated with 3 LZ-8 concentrations (0.1, 1, and 10 μg/mL) for 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 days.

Immunosuppressive Activity of LZ-8 In Vitro
Human T cells were incubated with irradiated allogeneic EBV-B cells and LZ-8 in three concentrations (0.1, 1, and 10 μg/mL) for 6 days.

Mouse Skin Transplantation
B10.D2 mice (H-2b) served as skin donors and C57Bl/10 mice (H-2b) as recipients. Full-thickness skin flaps were attached to the flank of recipients after removal of a corresponding skin area. Rejection occurred on the day of complete necrosis of the transplanted skin. Group 1 (controls, n = 12) received an injection of saline, twice per week; group 2 (n = 11) received 15 mg/kg LZ-8, twice per week; and group 3 (n = 12) received 7.5 mg/kg LZ-8 four times per week.

Rat Pancreatic Islet Transplantation
Lewis rats (RT-1b) were the donors of pancreatic islets and diabetic (streptozotocin IV) F344 rats (RT-1b) were the recipients of two donor islet grafts. Pancreatic islets were obtained after intraductal distension with collagenase, stationary digestion, filtration, and density gradient centrifugation, as published earlier. Rejection occurred on the day of complete necrosis of the transplanted islets. Group A (controls) rejected their islet grafts after 4.7 ± 0.15 days. MST ± SD of transplanted islets in group B was 9.7 ± 0.8 days and in groups C and D 11.0 ± 0.7 days and 12.5 ± 1.2 days, respectively (groups B, C, D vs A: P < .01; and B vs D: P < .05).

DISCUSSION

LZ-8 proves to have paradoxical immunomodulating effects. In the presence of monocytes, a strong mitogenic response on human MNC by LZ-8 was obtained. Evident
immunosuppression by LZ-8 was demonstrated on the proliferative response of T cells with EBV-B cells in the absence of monocytes. Also, in both tested in vivo allogeneic transplantation models, significant improvement of MST was achieved by LZ-8 in comparison with controls. No toxic side effects of LZ-8 could be discerned in these studies. Future studies should address exact modes of action of LZ-8.

REFERENCES