

Dengue-2 virus infection of human mononuclear cell lines and establishment of persistent infections

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Summary. Twenty three human mononuclear cell lines including ten myelomonocytic cell lines, eight B cell lines and five T cell lines, were examined to determine whether they could be infected with dengue-2 virus. All the cell lines were infected with dengue-2 virus as determined by immunofluorescent staining and by virus titration of culture supernatant fluids. K 562, Jiyoye and Jurkat, respectively, showed the highest percentage of infected cells of these myelomonocytic, B and T cell lines. Antibody to dengue-2 virus at subneutralizing concentrations augmented dengue-2 virus infection of myelomonocytic cell lines, but not of B cell lines or of T cell lines.

Persistent dengue-2 virus infection was established using a myelomonocytic cell line (K 562), a B cell line (Raji), and a T cell line (HSB-2). These cell lines maintained a high percentage (more than 70%) of dengue-2 virus antigen-positive cells for at least 25 weeks. Very low titers of infectious dengue-2 virus were detected in the culture supernatant fluids of the persistently infected cells. Dengue-2 virus antigen-positive Raji cell clones were established from persistently-infected Raji cells using limiting dilutions and all of the cells in these clones were dengue-2 virus antigen-positive. These findings demonstrate that a variety of human mononuclear cell lines can be infected with dengue-2 virus and may be useful as models for the analysis of dengue virus-human cell interactions in dengue virus infections.

Introduction

Dengue virus infections are serious health problems in many areas of the world; Southeast Asia, Central and South America [14]. Dengue viruses belong to the family *Flaviviridae*, genus *Flavivirus* and are transmitted to humans by mosquitoes. Dengue virus infections cause two forms of syndromes; dengue fever (DF) and dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF)/dengue shock syndrome (DSS)

[12]. DF is a self-limited febrile disease and a most common type of dengue. In some situations patients infected with dengue virus develop life-threatening complications such as hemorrhagic manifestations and shock, which are called DHF/DSS. The pathogenesis of DF and DHF/DSS has not been elucidated. It is speculated that following feeding by mosquitoes, the virus enter blood stream via lymphatics [30] and peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC), especially monocytes, support virus infections [16]. Thus, study of dengue virus-PBMC interaction is important to understand the pathogenesis of dengue virus infections. Many human mononuclear cell lines are available; therefore, we decided to examine a variety of human mononuclear cell lines to determine whether they could be infected with dengue virus and be useful for future studies. In this paper we attempt to infect 23 human mononuclear cell lines, including ten myelomonocytic cell lines, eight B cell lines and five T cell lines with dengue-2 virus. All the cell lines can be infected with dengue-2 virus. Persistent dengue-2 virus infection is established using K 562 (myelomonocytic), Raji (B), and HSB-2 (T) cell lines.

Materials and methods

Cell lines

We used human myelomonocytic cell lines K 562 [26], HEL92-1-7 [28], JOSK-I,-K,-M, and -S [31], U937 [34], THP-1 [37], KG-1 [20], and HL-60 [8], human B cell lines Jiyoye [32], ARH-77 [6], IM-9 [10], Raji [9], HS-Sultan [17], CA46 [27], Daudi [18], and Ramos [19], and human T cell lines Jurkat, CEM [11], HSB-2 [1], Molt 3 and Molt 4 [29]. K 562, HEL92-1-7, U937, THP-1, KG-1, HL-60, Jiyoye, ARH-77, IM-9, Raji, HS-Sultan, CA46, Daudi, Ramos, CEM, HSB-2, Molt 3, and Molt 4 were purchased from American Tissue Culture Collection (ATCC). JOSK-I, JOSK-K, JOSK-M, and JOSK-S were provided by Dr. Masatsugu Ohta of Jichi Medical School, Japan. CA46, Daudi, and Jurkat were provided by Dr. John Sullivan of University of Massachusetts Medical Center, Worcester, MA, U.S.A. All cell lines were maintained in RPMI 1640 medium (Flow Laboratories, McLean, VA, U.S.A.) supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) (GIBCO Laboratories, Grand Island, NY, U.S.A.), penicillin (100 U/ml) and streptomycin (100 µg/ml).

Virus and antibody

Dengue-2 virus, New Guinea C strain, was used for infection. The virus was received from Dr. Walter E. Brandt of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Washington, DC. The virus has been passed in mouse brain and was then propagated in *Aedes albopictus* (mosquito) cells (C6/36) as previously described [22]. The titer of the virus pool used in these experiments was 1×10^7 plaque forming unit (p.f.u.)/ml in Vero cells using previously described methods [22]. Ascitic fluid from mice hyperimmunized with dengue-2 virus was used as a source of anti-dengue-2 virus antibody. This antibody was also supplied by Dr. Brandt. The titer of this antibody was 1,024 as determined by a plaque neutralization test [23]. Hyperimmune ascitic fluid was heated at 56 °C for 30 min to destroy complement activity before use.

Infection of cells with dengue virus

Cells were washed once in RPMI 1640 containing 1% FBS and suspended at a concentration of 2×10^5 cells in 0.1 ml. They were then incubated with dengue-2 virus or with dengue-2

virus antibody complexes at 37°C for 2 h. These virus-antibody complexes were prepared by adding 10 µl of anti-dengue-2 virus antibody at a dilution of 1:200 to 5×10^6 p.f.u. of dengue-2 virus in 0.5 ml and were incubated at 4°C for 1 h. The multiplicity of infection (m.o.i.) of the virus inoculum was 5 p.f.u. per cell. Cells were washed twice and resuspended at a concentration of 2×10^5 cells per ml in RPMI 1640 containing 10% FBS. Cells were stained for the presence of dengue-2 viral antigen by indirect immunofluorescence (IF) at 24, 48, and 72 h as previously described [21]. The first antibody was the murine hyper-immune ascitic fluid to dengue-2 virus and the second antibody was a fluorescein isothiocyanate (FITC)-conjugated sheep anti-mouse immunoglobulin G antibody (Cappel Laboratories, Malvern, PA, U.S.A.).

Titration of dengue-2 virus

The amount of infectious virus produced by each cell line was determined by plaque assay in Vero cells. Intracellular virus was assayed after three freeze-thaw cycles with cells at concentration of 1×10^6 /ml [35, 36]. One-tenth ml of serially 10-fold-diluted culture supernatant fluid was placed on Vero cell monolayers in 24-well plates (Costar, Cambridge, MA, U.S.A.) and incubated at 37°C for 2 h. The supernatant fluid was then removed, the cells were washed once with MEM containing 2% FBS, and 1 ml 1% agar (Difco Laboratories, Detroit, MI, U.S.A.) containing RPMI 1640, 10% FBS, 0.5% non-essential amino acids, 0.5% essential vitamins and 0.3% DEAE-dextran was used as an overlay. The plates were incubated at 37°C for 7 days, stained with neutral red and the plaques counted [22].

Establishment of persistent infection

Cells were infected with dengue-2 virus at a m.o.i. of 5 p.f.u./ml in the absence of antibody as described above and were cultured at 2×10^5 /ml in RPMI containing 10% FBS. Cells were resuspended at a concentration of 2×10^5 /ml every 3 or 4 days. The percent of dengue antigen-positive cells was examined weekly using IF.

Establishment of dengue-2 virus antigen-positive Raji cell clones

Dengue-2 antigen-positive Raji cell clones were established using a limiting dilution technique. Persistently infected Raji cultures, 90% of which had dengue-2 virus antigen, were cultured at 0.5 cell/well (1 cell/2 wells) in 0.2 ml RPMI containing 10% FBS in 96 well flat bottom plates (Costar, Cambridge, MA, U.S.A.). Cells were cultured for 3 weeks. Growing cells were examined for cytoplasmic dengue-2 virus antigen using IF.

Results

Acute infection of human mononuclear cell lines with dengue-2 virus

Ten myelomonocytic cell lines, eight B cell lines, and five T cell lines were used in the experiments. All the cell lines could be infected with dengue-2 virus in the absence of antibody (Table 1). Antibody to dengue-2 virus augmented dengue-2 virus infection of myelomonocytic cell lines determined by IF and virus assays. However, antibody did not augment infection of B or T cell lines. In myelomonocytic cell lines K 562, HEL92-1-7, JOSK-I, and JOSK-M cells contained a high percentage of antigen-positive cells, while HL-60, KG-1, and THP-1 contained fewer antigen-positive cells. In B cell lines Jiyoye, ARH-77, and IM-9 contained a high percentage of antigen-positive cells, while Ramos, Daudi and CA46 contained fewer antigen-positive cells. In T cell lines Jurkat and CEM contained a high percentage of antigen-positive cells.

Table 1. Dengue-2 virus infection of human mononuclear cell lines*

Cell line	Antibody**	% dengue-2 antigen-positive cells			Virus titer (p.f.u./ml) at 48 h
		24 h	48 h	72 h	
Myelomonocytic cell lines					
K 562	+	90.8	95.9	99.0	5.0×10^6
	-	57.8	76.5	99.0	4.5×10^6
HEL92-1-7	+	35.8	35.4	41.8	2.3×10^5
	-	22.8	26.5	37.2	1.5×10^5
JOSK-I	+	37.5	34.3	18.5	5.0×10^5
	-	7.7	4.1	1.7	5.7×10^4
JOSK-M	+	28.6	23.0	8.4	2.3×10^5
	-	16.0	11.0	3.5	2.3×10^5
JOSK-S	+	16.1	9.5	6.4	1.6×10^5
	-	6.3	3.8	3.4	1.5×10^5
JOSK-K	+	15.1	14.1	3.9	4.0×10^5
	-	3.6	3.7	3.3	1.6×10^5
U937	+	15.7	17.4	4.1	3.8×10^4
	-	0.6	1.3	0.9	4.2×10^3
THP-1	+	7.5	6.8	9.8	1.1×10^5
	-	0.4	0.5	0.5	2.0×10^4
KG-1	+	2.4	1.7	0.9	1.3×10^4
	-	1.4	1.3	0.5	3.0×10^3
HL-60	+	1.7	2.9	1.6	1.4×10^3
	-	0.2	0.4	0.3	3.5×10^2
B cell lines					
Jiyoye	+	82.6	81.4	81.7	4.0×10^4
	-	82.4	86.4	85.0	5.0×10^4
ARH-77	+	28.4	45.7	30.8	5.4×10^5
	-	25.0	30.9	31.4	3.9×10^5
IM-9	+	22.6	22.7	17.2	3.5×10^5
	-	30.3	25.3	13.1	3.1×10^5
Raji	+	10.2	6.6	11.7	8.5×10^3
	-	7.8	9.6	13.7	9.5×10^3
HS-Sultan	+	8.8	6.9	8.3	4.0×10^3
	-	4.8	5.6	7.5	3.0×10^3
CA 46	+	1.5	1.5	1.3	4.0×10^3
	-	2.5	2.2	1.0	2.0×10^3

Table 1 continued

Cell line	Antibody**	% dengue-2 antigen-positive cells			Virus titer (p.f.u./ml) at 48 h
		24 h	48 h	72 h	
Daudi	+	1.1	1.1	0.8	1.0×10^2
	-	0.5	1.8	0.8	1.0×10^2
Ramos	+	0.8	0.5	0.4	8.0×10^0
	-	0.5	0.5	0.3	5.0×10^0
T cell lines					
Jurkat	+	50.0	39.2	39.7	6.6×10^4
	-	48.7	44.5	34.5	6.1×10^4
CEM	+	36.3	27.0	21.3	1.3×10^5
	-	34.0	23.4	18.5	1.5×10^5
HSB-2	+	13.8	24.4	81.7	1.0×10^5
	-	19.5	28.5	84.0	3.0×10^5
Molt 4	+	8.2	16.8	41.7	1.1×10^5
	-	7.6	15.3	44.4	1.7×10^5
Molt 3	+	4.0	12.9	14.0	7.5×10^3
	-	8.1	12.0	21.3	1.3×10^4

* Cells were infected with dengue-2 virus at a m.o.i. of 5 p.f.u./cell in the presence or absence of antibody as described in Materials and methods

** Anti-dengue-2 antibody was used at final dilution of 1:10,000. + Presence of antibody, - absence of antibody

Establishment of cell lines persistently infected with dengue-2 virus

We determined the ability of certain cells to become persistently infected with dengue-2 virus. K 562, Raji, and HSB-2 cell lines were infected with dengue-2 virus at m.o.i. of 5 p.f.u./cell in the absence of antibody to dengue-2 virus, and were cultured for 25 weeks. Cells were resuspended at a concentration of 2×10^5 /ml twice a week. The percent of dengue-2 virus antigen-positive cells was almost 100% one week after infection of K 562 (Fig. 1) and HSB-2 cells (Fig. 3), and three weeks after infection of Raji cells (Fig. 2). A high percentage (more than 70%) of dengue-2 virus antigen-positive cells was observed for 25 weeks. These results demonstrate that persistent dengue-2 virus infections were readily established in myelomonocytic, B and T cell lines.

We measured dengue-2 virus titers in culture supernatant fluids 22 weeks after the infection. Infectious dengue-2 virus at the titer of 2.6×10^2 p.f.u./ml, 1.8×10^2 p.f.u./ml, and 1.0×10^2 p.f.u./ml were detected in the supernatant fluids of persistently infected K 562, HSB-2, and Raji, respectively. Intracellular

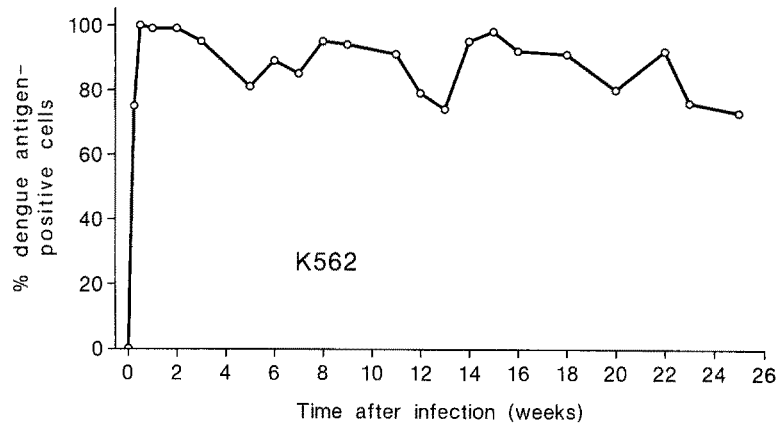


Fig. 1. Persistent infection of K 562 cells infected with dengue-2 virus at a m.o.i. of 5 p.f.u./cell. Cells were resuspended at 2×10^5 /ml every 3 or 4 days. Percentage of dengue-2 virus antigen-positive cells was determined using IF

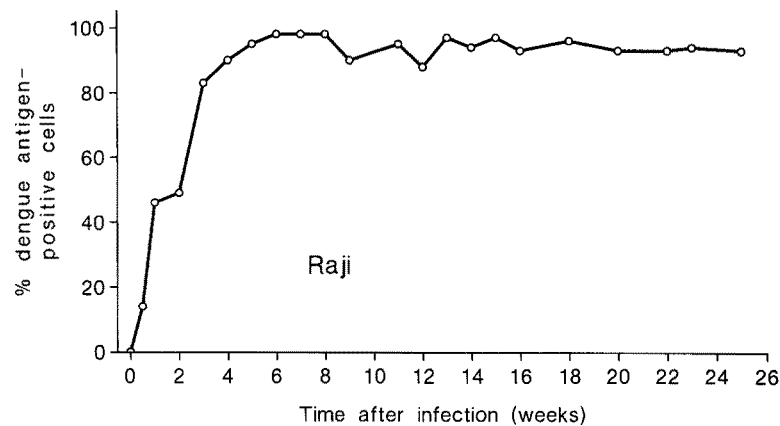


Fig. 2. Persistent infection of Raji cells infected with dengue-2 virus at a m.o.i. of 5 p.f.u./cell. Cells were resuspended at 2×10^5 /ml every 3 or 4 days. Percentage of dengue-2 virus antigen-positive cells was determined using IF

dengue virus was then detected after three freeze-thaw cycles of 1×10^6 infected cells. Intracellular virus titers were 2.2×10^2 p.f.u./ml and 4.0×10^1 p.f.u./ml in K 562 and HSB-2 cells, respectively. Intracellular virus was not detected (< 10 p.f.u./ml) in persistently infected Raji cells.

Establishment of Raji cell clones persistently infected with dengue-2 virus using a limiting dilution technique

Using a limiting dilution technique, we tried to determine whether a single dengue-2 virus antigen-positive cell can proliferate to produce multiple antigen-positive cells. Persistently infected Raji cells, 90% of which were antigen-pos-

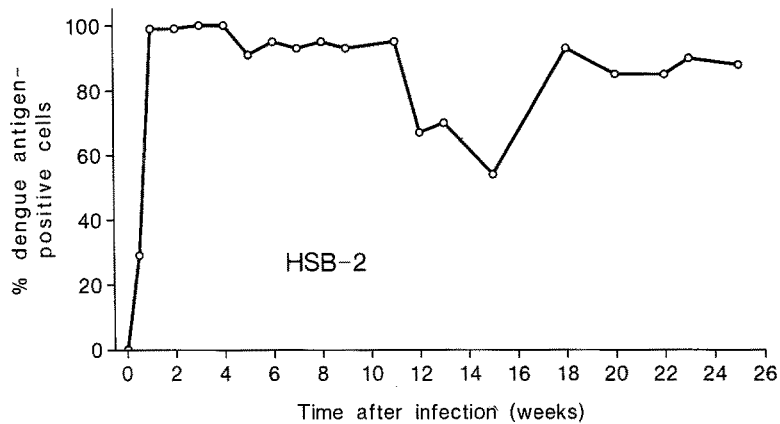


Fig. 3. Persistent infection of HSB-2 cells infected with dengue-2 virus at a m.o.i. of 5 p.f.u./cell. Cells were resuspended at 2×10^5 /ml every 3 or 4 days. Percentage of dengue-2 virus antigen-positive cells was determined using IF

itive, were cultured at a concentration of 0.5 cells/well. The clonal lines were examined for dengue-2 virus antigens after 3 weeks. 61 clones were established, 54 (89%) of which contained 100% antigen-positive cells, and seven (11%) of which contained no antigen-positive cells.

Discussion

In this paper dengue-2 virus-human cell interactions have been studied using human mononuclear cell lines. We have demonstrated that all of the 23 human mononuclear cell lines including ten myelomonocytic cell lines, eight B cell lines, and five T cell lines can be infected with dengue-2 virus. It has been reported that human monocytes are the cells that predominantly support infections with dengue viruses [16]. It has also been reported that B blast cells prepared from PBMC and Epstein-Barr virus (EBV)-transformed B lymphoblastoid cell lines could be infected with a dengue virus [35, 36], but that T blast cells prepared from PBMC or a T cell line, Molt-4, could not be infected [36]. In our study we examined five human T cell lines, and all could be infected with dengue-2 virus. A human dengueviruses-specific T cell clone, which was established from the PBMC of a donor who had been previously infected with dengue-3 virus and has the CD3⁺, CD4⁺, CD8⁻ phenotype [24], could be infected with dengue-2 virus (data not presented). Our success in infecting human T cells may be due to the strain of dengue-2 virus or due to the higher m.o.i. we used. We used the New Guinea C strain at a m.o.i. of 5, while Theofilopoulos et al. who reported that T cells could not be infected with dengue-2 virus used the 16681 strain at a m.o.i. of 0.05 [36]. Although most reports have shown that cells infected with dengue virus have monocyte-like morphology in vivo [3, 4],

Scott et al. isolated dengue virus from the non-adherent fraction of PBMC from patients [33]. Our results suggest that B and T cells may support the replication of dengue-2 virus and probably other dengue viruses, especially if the B and T cells are activated as they are in these cell lines.

It has been reported that subneutralizing concentrations of antibody to dengue viruses augment dengue virus infection of Fc_γ receptor-positive cells [15]. This is due to the uptake of virus-antibody complexes by Fc_γ receptor-positive cells, and may contribute to the pathogenesis of severe complications of dengue [7, 13]. In the present study all the myelomonocytic cell lines showed antibody-dependent enhancement of dengue-2 virus infection, whereas we did not observe enhancement using B cell lines or T cell lines. It has been reported that human B cells and some B cell lines have Fc_γ RII similar to human monocytes and myelomonocytic cell lines [2]. Using K562 cells, we have found that Fc_γ RII mediates antibody-dependent enhancement [R. Littaua et al., submitted for publ.]. However, it has also been reported that Fc_γ RII of B cell lines may be somewhat different from Fc_γ RII of monocytes and myelomonocytic cell lines, because a monoclonal antibody to Fc_γ RII of K562 did not react with Fc_γ RII of B cell lines, Daudi and Raji [25]. This may explain the absence of antibody-dependent enhancement of dengue-2 virus infection using B cell lines. Studies of antibody-dependent enhancement have been mainly performed using U937 cells [5]. Our results suggest that other myelomonocyte cell lines, such as THP-1 and JOSK-I, are also useful for the study of antibody-dependent enhancement of virus infection with dengue viruses and perhaps other flaviviruses.

In this study we established persistent dengue-2 virus infections in a myelomonocytic cell line (K562), a B cell line (Raji) and a T cell line (HSB-2). Persistent dengue-2 virus infection of Raji cells has been reported [35], and we previously used persistently infected Raji cells as targets in cell killing assays [22] and as inducer of interferon (IFN) from PBMC [23]. The present results show that human myelomonocytic and T cells also support persistent dengue-2 virus infections. The interaction between dengue-2 virus and myelomonocytic, T and B cells and the mechanism of virus persistence are interesting subjects to be elucidated. Raji cell clones were established and the percent of antigen-positive and -negative clones was found to be similar to the frequency of dengue-2 virus antigen-positive and -negative cells in the original culture. All of the cells in these antigen-positive clones continued to contain dengue-2 virus antigen, and all of the cells in the antigen-negative clones continued to be dengue-2 virus antigen-negative. These results suggest that dengue-2 virus antigen-positive cells may proliferate and produce antigen-positive progeny cells.

These experiments demonstrate that dengue-2 virus readily establishes persistent infections in human T, B, and myelomonocytic cell lines *in vitro*. It is conceivable that persistent infections may occur *in vivo* and that infected cells may continue to stimulate dengue virus-specific memory T lymphocytes to maintain dengue virus-specific immunity.

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