Establishment and Characterisation of a New Well-Differentiated Pancreatic Neuroendocrine Tumor Cell Line

Schrader J\textsuperscript{1,2}; Behrang Y\textsuperscript{1}; Benten D\textsuperscript{1}; Fahl M\textsuperscript{1}; Rhotert C\textsuperscript{1}; Perez D\textsuperscript{2}; Bockhorn M\textsuperscript{2}; Izbicki JR\textsuperscript{2}; Lohse AW\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1}I. Medical Department, University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, Hamburg, Germany
\textsuperscript{2}Department of General, Visceral and Thoracic Surgery, University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, Hamburg, Germany

\textbf{Background:} The development of new therapeutic strategies for patients with pancreatic neuroendocrine tumours is impaired by the paucity of suitable pre-clinical models. Although the two available tumour cell lines BON and QGP have a neuroendocrine phenotype, the proliferation rates are far too high for a well differentiated neuroendocrine tumour. Hence, there is great need for the development of new neuroendocrine tumor cell lines.

\textbf{Methods:} We successfully established a new primary human neuroendocrine tumor cell line from a lymph node metastasis of a patient with a pancreatic neuroendocrine tumor. The expression profile, growth characteristic and treatment response in this cell line was analyzed in comparison to the established BON and QGP cells.

\textbf{Results:} The new cell line ("NT-3") has now been cultured for more than 18 month with a stable neuroendocrine tumor phenotype assessed by chromogranin A, synaptophysin and SSTR expression. The cells have a doubling time of 8 days in comparison to a doubling time of less than 2 days in the BON and QGP cells. In soft agar the NT-3 cells form small colonies after an incubation period of 8 weeks with a colony frequency
of ~2% of plated cells. The expression of SSTR subtypes 1, 2, 3 and 5 is at least 10-fold higher in NT-3 cells compared to BON and QGP. Likewise, the expression of the pro-angiogenic factors VEGF A, VEGF B and Angiopoetin 2 is more than 5-fold higher in NT-3 cells. As a marker of functionality the NT-3 cells express and secrete insulin. The IC\textsubscript{50} for treatment with streptozotozin was ~1mM and >10mM and with 5-FU was ~100µM and >500µM in NT-3 and QGP cells, respectively.

**Conclusion:** In summary, we have established a new slow growing, functional active pancreatic neuroendocrine tumour cell line with a well differentiated phenotype and high expression of pro-angiogenic factors.