Renal Stem Cells Transplantation in Autosomal Recessive Polycystic Kidney Disease; a Visible Science Fiction

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Rec Date: June 15, 2016; Acc Date: June 23, 2016; Pub Date: June 29, 2016

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Introduction

Autosomal recessive polycystic kidney disease (ARPKD) is a developmental disease that affects 1 in 10,000-40,000 live births worldwide. It manifests in the form of disturbed cellular proliferation/apoptosis that affects the epithelium of the renal collecting ducts and the biliary ducts. Disturbed cellular polarity plays a major role in the disease development, rendering the cyst epithelium secretory rather than absorptive [1]. The main molecular changes of ARPKD are loss-of-function mutations of Fibrocystin, defective Focal Adhesion Kinase (FAK) activation, and defective β1 Na+/K+ ATPase expression [2].

Stem cell therapy could shine as a therapeutic hope, but which and how?

There are 3 types of stem cells;

- Embryonic stem cells, which are derived from the inner cell mass of blastocyst and have the ability to differentiate into cell types of all three germ lineages, but carry high risk of teratoma [3].
- Induced pluripotent stem cells, which are similar to the embryonic stem cells in the ability to differentiate into cell types of all three germ lineages and the risk of teratoma, but are derived from the somatic cells [3].
- Somatic stem cells can be isolated from the adult tissue, are multipotent, with limited self-renewal capacity and limited life span, but with no teratogenic risk [3].

In ARPKD, which is a genetic developmental disease, autotransplantation of stem cells would not help because the underlying Fibrocystin mutations are expected to be present in the stem cells. In addition, the infantile age of the patients may potentiate the teratogenic risk of pluripotent stem cells. Accordingly, somatic stem cells seem to be of choice, but they can differentiate into limited cell types depending on the tissue of origin.

Future Hope

The renal stem cells might be isolated from a single or multiple donors through guided renal biopsies, where the renal biopsy could be partially digested by collagenase to obtain cellular suspensions that could be treated and cultured as described by Gupta et al. [4]. The stem cells could be then transplanted and introduced through the renal artery, with the hope of the successful slowdown, stop and or reversal of the cystic formation. Repetition of the procedure at frequent intervals might have a more positive impact, if the intra-renal administration could be developed in a relatively less invasive and more efficient intervention.

References