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(54) Benævnelse: **FREMGANGSMÅDER OG FARMACEUTISKE SAMMENSÆTNINGER TIL BEHANDLINGEN AF ALDERSRELATERET MAKULADEGENERATION (AMD)**

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DESCRIPTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION:

[0001] The present invention relates to methods and pharmaceutical compositions for the treatment of age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION:

[0002] Increased oxidative stress has been implicated in the pathogenesis of many different diseases. As a consequence of oxidative stress, proteins, lipids and DNA can be damaged, often resulting in structural changes. For example, when membrane phospholipids undergo lipid peroxidation, malondialdehyde (MDA) and other reactive decomposition products are generated. MDA and its condensation products are reliable markers for oxidative stress and have been associated with many disorders, including age-related macular degeneration (AMD), a degenerative disease affecting the retina that leads to irreversible vision loss. AMD is the principal cause of visual impairment in western countries, affecting more than 1.5 million individuals in France, eight million people in the United States. The estimated prevalence of advanced AMD is only of 0.2% at ages 55 to 64 years, but increases to 13% in those older than 85 years. A hallmark of developing AMD is the accumulation of extracellular deposits, termed drusen, which have been shown to contain MDA. Accordingly, methods that can lead to reduction of malondialdehyde (MDA) are highly desirable for the treatment of AMD.

[0003] The international application WO2002/081513A2 and WO2005/113586A2 describe the identification of two rod-derived cell viability factors RdCVF1 and RdCVF2, respectively encoded by Nxnll gene and Nxnl2 gene for the treatment of retinal dystrophies, without distinguishing short and long isoforms.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION:

[0004] The present invention relates a Rod-derived Cone Viability Factor Long isoform (RdCVFL) polynucleotide or polypeptide for use in a method for the treatment of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) in a subject in need thereof, by reducing the malondialdehyde (MDA) level in the retina.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION:

[0005] As used herein the term "RdCVF" has its general meaning in the art and refers to rod-

derived cone viability factor (Léveillard T, Mohand-Saïd S, Lorentz O, Hicks D, Fintz AC, Clérin E et al. Identification and characterization of rod-derived cone viability factor. Nat Genet 2004; 36: 755-759.). RdCVF corresponds to a truncated thioredoxin (TRX)-like protein and is encoded by the exon 1 of the nucleoredoxin-like 1 (*Nxnl1*) gene. In addition to the RdCVF mRNA, the *Nxnl1* gene produces a second mRNA by splicing together exons 1 and 2 to yield a longer protein isoform "RdCVFL" containing an entire TRX fold. A representative amino acid sequence of RdCVFL is accessible in GenBanl under Q8VC33 accession number.

[0006] The present disclosure relates to use, methods and pharmaceutical compositions for treating or preventing age-related macular degeneration.

[0007] In particular, gene therapy is a particularly convenient way to treat age-related macular degeneration as it enables the provision of a constant supply of a polypeptide.

[0008] Thus the present disclosure further relates to a method for treating or preventing age-related macular degeneration which comprises the step of administering a subject in need thereof with a RdCVFL polynucleotide, i.e. a nucleic acid sequence that encodes a wild-type RdCVFL polypeptide, so that RdCVFL is expressed in vivo by the cells of the subject that have been transfected with said polynucleotide. Accordingly, said method leads to an overexpression of wild-type RdCVF.

[0009] The present invention relates to a Rod-derived Cone Viability Factor Long isoform (RdCVFL) polynucleotide or polypeptide for use in a method for the treatment of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) in a subject in need thereof, by reducing the malondialdehyde (MDA) level in the retina.

[0010] In one embodiment, the RdCVFL polynucleotide sequence according to the invention is associated with elements that enable for regulation of its expression. In a particular embodiment, said elements that enable for regulation of its expression comprise a promoter sequence.

[0011] In one embodiment, the RdCVFL polynucleotide sequence according to the invention is in the form of a vector.

[0012] As used herein, the term "vector" refers to a nucleic acid molecule capable of transporting another nucleic acid to which it has been linked. One type of vector is a "plasmid", which refers to a circular double stranded DNA loop into which additional DNA segments can be ligated. Another type of vector is a viral vector, wherein additional DNA segments can be ligated into the viral genome. Certain vectors are capable of autonomous replication in a host cell into which they are introduced (e.g., bacterial vectors having a bacterial origin of replication and episomal mammalian vectors). Other vectors (e.g., non-episomal mammalian vectors) are integrated into the genome of a host cell upon introduction into the host cell, and thereby are replicated along with the host genome. Moreover, certain vectors, expression vectors, are capable of directing the expression of genes to which they are operably linked. In general,

expression vectors of utility in recombinant DNA techniques are often in the form of plasmids (vectors). However, the invention is intended to include such other forms of expression vectors, such as viral vectors (e.g., replication defective retroviruses, adenoviruses and adeno-associated viruses (AAV)), which serve equivalent functions.

[0013] In a preferred embodiment, the expression vector is an AAV vector. Adeno-associated viral (AAV) vectors have become powerful gene delivery tools for the treatment of retinal degeneration. AAV vectors possess a number of features that render them ideally suited for retinal gene therapy, including a lack of pathogenicity, minimal immunogenicity, and the ability to transduce postmitotic cells in a stable and efficient manner. In the sheltered environment of the retina, AAV vectors are able to maintain high levels of transgene expression in the retinal pigmented epithelium (RPE), photoreceptors, or ganglion cells for long periods of time after a single treatment. Each cell type can be specifically targeted by choosing the appropriate combination of AAV serotype, promoter, and intraocular injection site.

[0014] The RdCVFL polynucleotide may be introduced into a target cell by means of any procedure known for the delivery of nucleic acids to the nucleus of cells, ex vivo, on cells in culture or removed from an animal or a subject, or in vivo.

[0015] Ex vivo introduction may be performed by any standard method well known by one skilled in the art, e.g. transfection, electroporation, iontophoresis, microinjection, transduction, cell fusion, DEAE dextran, calcium phosphate precipitation, or use of a gene gun.

[0016] The RdCVFL polynucleotide can also be introduced ex vivo or in vivo by lipofection. In certain embodiments, the use of liposomes and/or nanoparticles is contemplated for the introduction of the donor nucleic acid targeting system into host cells.

[0017] Nanocapsules can generally entrap compounds in a stable and reproducible way. To avoid side effects due to intracellular polymeric overloading, such ultrafine particles (sized around 0.1 μm) should be designed using polymers able to be degraded in vivo. Biodegradable polyalkyl-cyanoacrylate nanoparticles that meet these requirements are contemplated, and such particles may be are easily made.

[0018] Liposomes are formed from phospholipids that are dispersed in an aqueous medium and spontaneously form multilamellar concentric bilayer vesicles (also termed multilamellar vesicles (MLVs)). MLVs generally have diameters of from 25 nm to 4 μm. Sonication of MLVs results in the formation of small unilamellar vesicles (SUVs) with diameters in the range of 200 to 500 Å, containing an aqueous solution in the core.

[0019] Synthetic cationic lipids designed to limit the difficulties and dangers encountered with liposome mediated transfection can be used to prepare liposomes for in vivo transfection of a gene encoding a marker. The use of cationic lipids may promote encapsulation of negatively charged nucleic acids, and also promote fusion with negatively charged cell membranes.

[0020] Alternatively, the polynucleotide may be injected directly into the vitreous, aqueous humour, ciliary body tissue(s) or cells and/or extra-ocular muscles by electroporation means

[0021] Alternatively, one of the simplest and the safest way to deliver RdCVFL polynucleotide across cell membranes in vivo may involve the direct application of high concentration free or naked polynucleotides (typically mRNA or DNA). By "naked DNA (or RNA)" is meant a DNA (RNA) molecule which has not been previously complexed with other chemical moieties. Naked DNA uptake by animal cells may be increased by administering the cells simultaneously with excipients and the nucleic acid. Such excipients are reagents that enhance or increase penetration of the DNA across cellular membranes and thus delivery to the cells delivery of the therapeutic agent. Various excipients have been described in the art, such as surfactants, e.g. a surfactant selected form the group consisting of Triton X-100, sodium dodecyl sulfate, Tween 20, and Tween 80; bacterial toxins, for instance streptolysin O, cholera toxin, and recombinant modified labile toxin of E coli; and polysaccharides, such as glucose, sucrose, fructose, or maltose, for instance, which act by disrupting the osmotic pressure in the vicinity of the cell membrane. Other methods have been described to enhance delivery of free polynucleotides, such as blocking of polynucleotide inactivation via endo- or exonucleolytic cleavage by both extra- and intracellular nucleases.

[0022] Alternatively, the present disclosure also provides a method for treating or preventing age-related macular degeneration which comprises the step of administering a subject in need thereof with a wild-type RdCVFL polypeptide.

[0023] Knowing the amino acid sequence of the desired sequence, one skilled in the art can readily produce said polypeptides, by standard techniques for production of polypeptides. For instance, they can be synthesized using well-known solid phase method, preferably using a commercially available peptide synthesis apparatus (such as that made by Applied Biosystems, Foster City, California) and following the manufacturer's instructions.

[0024] Alternatively, the polypeptides can be synthesized by recombinant DNA techniques as is now well-known in the art. For example, these fragments can be obtained as DNA expression products after incorporation of DNA sequences encoding the desired (poly)peptide into expression vectors and introduction of such vectors into suitable eukaryotic or prokaryotic hosts that will express the desired polypeptide, from which they can be later isolated using well-known techniques.

[0025] Polypeptides can be use in an isolated (e.g., purified) form or contained in a vector, such as a membrane or lipid vesicle (e.g. a liposome).

[0026] Delivery of RdCVFL polypeptide can also be performed directly in the eye by intra vitreal injection.

[0027] Polynucleotide or polypeptide are administered to the subject in therapeutically effective amount. By a "therapeutically effective amount" of the polypeptide or polynucleotide is meant a

sufficient amount of the polypeptide polynucleotide to treat AMD at a reasonable benefit/risk ratio applicable to any medical treatment. It will be understood, however, that the total daily usage of the polypeptides or polynucleotides and compositions will be decided by the attending physician within the scope of sound medical judgment. The specific therapeutically effective dose level for any particular subject will depend upon a variety of factors including the disorder being treated and the severity of the disorder; activity of the specific polypeptide employed; the specific composition employed, the age, body weight, general health, sex and diet of the subject; the time of administration, route of administration, and rate of excretion of the specific polypeptide employed; the duration of the treatment; drugs used in combination or coincidential with the specific polypeptide employed; and like factors well known in the medical arts. For example, it is well within the skill of the art to start doses of the compound at levels lower than those required to achieve the desired therapeutic effect and to gradually increase the dosage until the desired effect is achieved.

[0028] The polypeptides or polynucleotides of the invention are typically combined with pharmaceutical acceptable carrier to form pharmaceutical composition.

[0029] The phrase "pharmaceutically acceptable" refers to molecular entities and compositions that are physiologically tolerable and do not typically produce an allergic or similar untoward reaction, such as gastric upset, dizziness and the like, when administered to a human. Preferably, as used herein, the term "pharmaceutically acceptable" means approved by a regulatory agency of the Federal or a state government or listed in the U.S. Pharmacopeia or other generally recognized pharmacopeia for use in animals, and more particularly in humans.

[0030] The term "carrier" refers to a diluent, adjuvant, excipient, or vehicle with which the compound is administered. Such pharmaceutical carriers can be sterile liquids, such as water and oils, including those of petroleum, animal, vegetable or synthetic origin, such as peanut oil, soybean oil, mineral oil, sesame oil and the like. Water or aqueous solution saline solutions and aqueous dextrose and glycerol solutions are preferably employed as carriers, particularly for injectable solutions. Suitable pharmaceutical carriers are described in "Remington's Pharmaceutical Sciences" by E.W. Martin.

[0031] In a particular embodiment, the RdCVFL polypeptide or polynucleotide of the invention can be delivered in a pharmaceutically acceptable ophthalmic vehicle, such that the polypeptide can penetrate the corneal and internal regions of the eye, as for example the anterior chamber, posterior chamber, vitreous body, aqueous humor, vitreous humor, cornea, iris/ciliary, lens, choroid/retina and sclera.

[0032] The invention will be further illustrated by the following figures and examples. However, these examples and figures should not be interpreted in any way as limiting the scope of the present invention.

FIGURES:

[0033] Figure 1 shows the levels of the lipid peroxidation by product malondialdehyde (MDA) in *rd10* retinas treated with PBS or AAV vectors comprising a polynucleotide encoding for RdCVFL, a polynucleotide encoding for RdCVF or a polynucleotide encoding for GFP.

EXAMPLE:

[0034] A thiobarbituric acid reactive substances (TBARS) assay (Ohkawa, H., Ohishi, N., and Yagi, K. Assay for lipid peroxides in animal tissues by thiobarbituric acid reaction. Anal Biochem 95 351-358 (1979)). was used to determine levels of the lipid peroxidation by product malondialdehyde (MDA) in *rd10* retinas treated with PBS or AAV vectors comprising a polynucleotide encoding for RdCVFL, a polynucleotide encoding for RdCVF or a polynucleotide encoding for GFP. The test was performed on three pooled retinas and was repeated three times. A representative assay is shown (Figure 1). MDA levels were decreased by 18% ±0.9% in RdCVFL-treated eyes compared to untreated eyes. Accordingly, use of RdCVFL could be suitable for the treatment of AMD wherein accumulation of MDA represents a cause of the disease.

REFERENCES:

[0035] Throughout this application, various references describe the state of the art to which this invention pertains.

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

This list of references cited by the applicant is for the reader's convenience only. It does not form part of the European patent document. Even though great care has been taken in compiling the references, errors or omissions cannot be excluded and the EPO disclaims all liability in this regard.

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- **OHKAWA, H.OHISHI, N.YAGI, K**Assay for lipid peroxides in animal tissues by thiobarbituric acid reactionAnal Biochem, 1979, vol. 95, 351-358 [0034]

Patentkrav

1. Rod-derived Cone Viability Factor Long isoform (RdCVFL) - polynukleotid eller -polypeptid til anvendelse i en fremgangsmåde til behandlingen af aldersrelateret makuladegeneration (AMD) hos et individ, som har behov derfor, ved at reducere malondialdehyd (MDA) -niveauet i nethinden.

2. RdCVFL-polynukleotid til anvendelse ifølge krav 1, hvor RdCVFL-polynukleotidsekvensen er forbundet med elementer, som muliggør regulering af dets ekspression.

3. RdCVFL-polynukleotid til anvendelse ifølge krav 2, hvor elementerne, som muliggør regulering af dets ekspression, omfatter en promotorsekvens.

4. RdCVFL-polynukleotid til anvendelse ifølge krav 1, hvor RdCVFL-polynukleotid-sekvensen er i form af en vektor.

5. RdCVFL-polynukleotid til anvendelse ifølge krav 4, hvor vektoren er en AAV-vektor.

6. RdCVFL-polynukleotid eller -polypeptid til anvendelse ifølge krav 1, hvor RdCVFL-polynukleotidet eller -polypeptidet indgives i en farmaceutisk acceptabel oftalmisk vehikel.

DRAWINGS

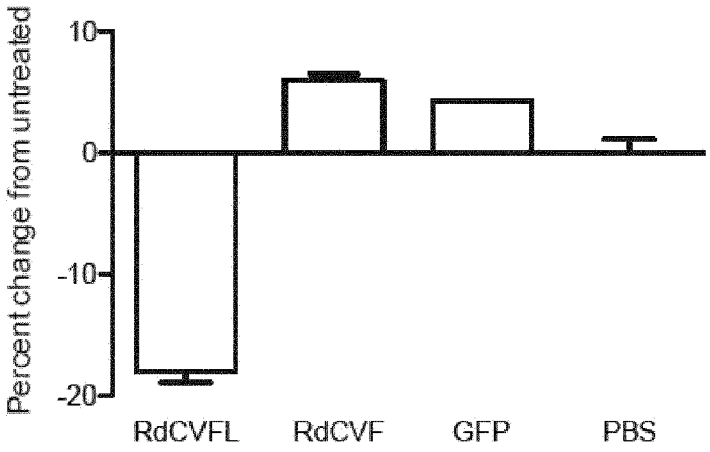

Figure 1