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研究課題名(和文)The establishment of a biomimetic human iPSC-derived cornea-on-a-chip for the

pre-clinical evaluation of ophthalmic nanomedicines

研究課題名(英文)The establishment of a biomimetic human iPSC-derived cornea-on-a-chip for the

pre-clinical evaluation of ophthalmic nanomedicines

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研究成果の概要(和文):本研究の目的は、眼科用医薬品の前臨床試験における有効性と毒性を研究するために、ヒト角膜のin vitroモデルを確立することである。これを達成するために、以下を実施した:(1)マイクロ流体技術により、まばたきに似た刺激を与えることができるヒト角膜上皮モデルを構築した。(2) ヒトiPS細胞から角膜上皮細胞の作製に成功した。(3) 非標的メタボローム解析により、ヒト角膜オンチップにおける栄養・代謝物の輸送・分泌の時空間的評価を検証した。

研究成果の学術的意義や社会的意義

The development of a human cornea model that replicates eye-like blinking can enhance the prediction of ophthalmic drug safety and efficacy. Current preclinical models lack accuracy in this regard. This advancement enables the in vitro reproduction and study of the human cornea.

研究成果の概要(英文): The purpose of this research is to establish an in vitro model of the human cornea for studying the pre-clinical efficacy and toxicity of ophthalmic drugs. To achieve this, we have: (1) Employed microfluidic technology to construct a human corneal epithelium model that can be subjected to eye blinking-like stimuli.(2) Successfully generated functional corneal epithelial cells from human iPS cells. (3) Used untargeted metabolomics analysis to test the spatiotemporal evaluation of nutrient and metabolite transport and secretion in the human cornea on a chip.

研究分野: 生体医工学関連

キーワード: Cornea on a chip Microfluidic iPSC

1. 研究開始当初の背景

The eye is an invaluable organ that allows us to see and comprehend the visual world. However, age-related eye diseases have become a major concern among the elderly population worldwide, including Japan. Although new therapeutics have been quickly developed, the lack of experimental models that accurately reflect the physiology of the eye has hindered the precise validation of the safety and functionality of drugs during clinical trials. Understanding the cellular and molecular mechanisms in a spatiotemporal manner in animal models is challenging. Additionally, the variability in physiological responses between animal cornea models and the human cornea can result in serious misinterpretation of the efficacy and nanotoxicity of drugs. As a result, there is an urgent need for new biomimetic models of the human cornea to be utilized for the preclinical evaluation of drugs.

2. 研究の目的

To establish a relevant *in vitro* biomimetic platform of the human cornea for studying the preclinical efficacy and toxicity of ophthalmic drugs.

3. 研究の方法

(1) Microfluidic devices

The microfluidic device was fabricated by stereolithographic 3D-printing techniques. The device was made of PDMS and consisted of microchannels separated by a porous membrane. The microfluidic device has been developed for culturing human corneal epithelial cells under dynamic flow conditions, mimicking the shear stress of eye blinking. The device consists of four upper and lower channels separated by a porous membrane, with corneal epithelial cells seeded on the upper channel and cultured for ten days.

(2) hPSC-derived corneal epithelial cells

A simplified small molecule-based corneal induction method (SSM-CI) was developed to generate corneal epithelial cells from human pluripotent stem cells (hPSCs). The method used a defined culturing media containing TGF- β , Wnt/ β -catenin pathway inhibitors, and bFGF growth factor for a period of 25 days. Cell characteristics were analyzed by immunofluorescence staining as well as by RNA sequencing (RNA-seq) analysis.

(3) LCMS-untargeted metabolomic

One microliter of extracellular metabolites from the corneal epithelium on a chip (CEpOC) in the upper chambers (apical) and lower chambers (basolateral) were collected temporally for 48 hours and then samples were analyzed by LCMS. Concurrently, essential transporters expression was investigated.

4. 研究成果

(1) The development of microfluidic device for the construction of human corneal epithelium barrier under eye blinking-like stimulus

The microfluidic device was fabricated to be applicable with eye-like blinking stimulus (**Figure 1a**). In the device, human corneal epithelial cells (HCE-T) formed a barrier with high expression of ZO-1 tight junction protein shown in a green fluorescence over 10 days (**Figure 1b, c**). Bi-directional and unidirectional flows that emulate the eye blinking stimulus and aqueous humor drainage were then applied, stimulating HCE-T cells with 0.6 dyn s cm⁻² of shear stress. After 24 hours, the fluid stimuli strengthened the barrier function, as indicated by the increased expression of cytokeratin 19 intermediate filaments (CK-19) shown a red fluorescence (**Figure 1d**).

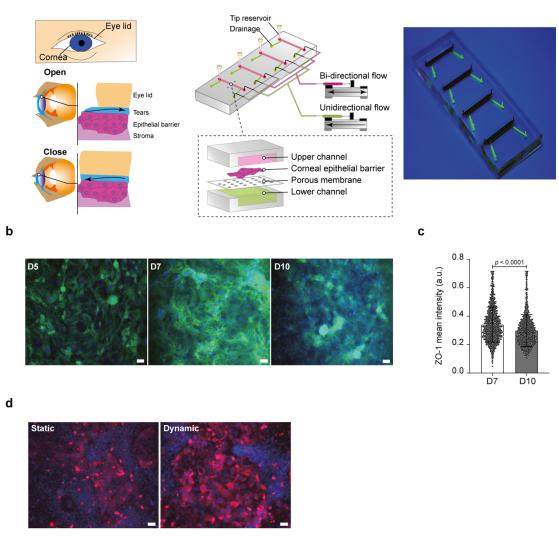


Figure 1. The development of human corneal epithelium on a chip under eye like blinking stimulus

(2) The generation of human pluripotent stem cells (hPSCs)-derived corneal epithelial cells

SSM-CI method enabled the generation of corneal epithelial cells by using xeno-free medium in combination with chemical inhibitors (IWR1 endo and A83-01) (**Figure 2a**). This method resulted in well-differentiated corneal epithelial cells expressing relevant maturation markers such as cytokeratin 12 intermediate filaments (CK-12) shown in red fluorescence (**Figure 2b, c**). Moreover, RNA-seq analysis showed significant upregulation of corneal progenitor and adult corneal epithelial phenotypes and the down regulation of pluripotency markers indicated the fidelity of the results (**Figure 2d**).

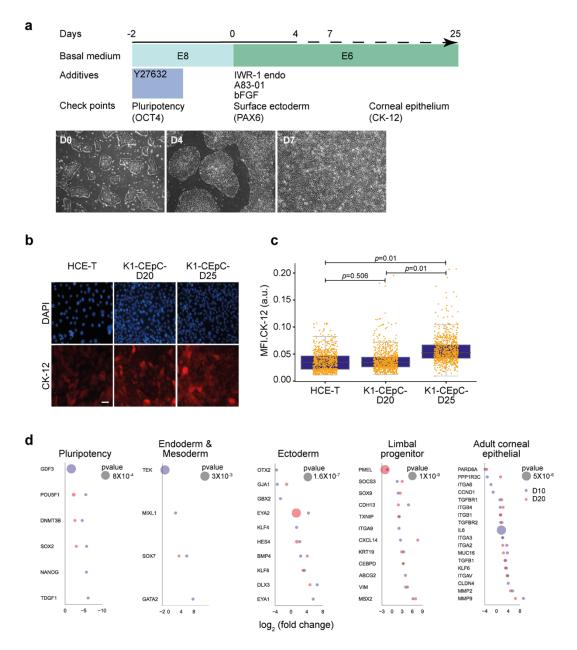


Figure 2. The generation t of human corneal epithelial cells from hPSCs

(3) The spatiotemporal evaluation of nutrients and metabolites transportation/ secretion in the human corneal epithelium on a chip using LCMS-based untargeted metabolomics analysis

CEpOC was utilized to investigate the metabolism and the transportation of molecules across the corneal epithelial barrier. CEpOC enabled the spatiotemporal collection and analysis of micro-scaled extracellular metabolites from both sides of the barriers (**Figure 3a**). Untargeted metabolomics analysis of longitudinal samples of 104 metabolites were annotated. Moreover, the secretion of biologically relevant metabolites and the depletion of essential nutrients such as glutathione and uric acid was noticed. This method also allowed for the investigation of secretion and transportation activities across the polarized barrier in correlation with the expression of corneal transporters (**Figure 3b, c**).

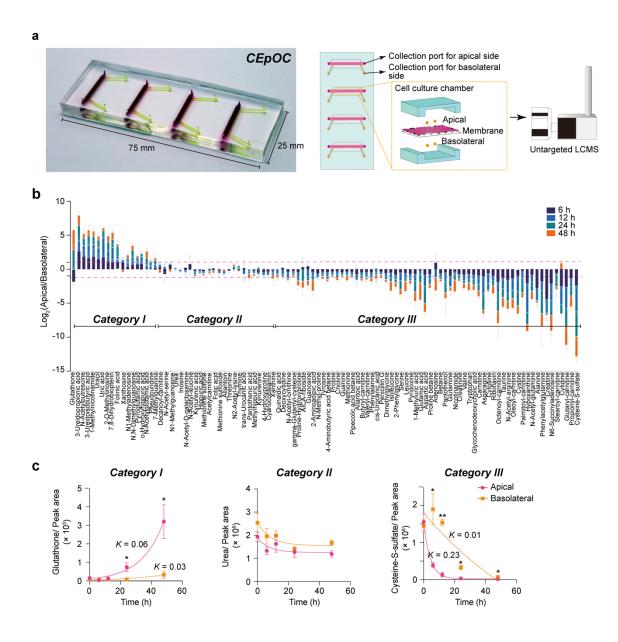


Figure 3. Spatiotemporal determination of metabolites in the human corneal epithelium on a chip

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7.科研費を使用して開催した国際研究集会

〔国際研究集会〕 計0件

8. 本研究に関連して実施した国際共同研究の実施状況

	共同研究相手国	相手方研究機関
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