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The Role of Endothelial Mitochondria Transfer in Melanoma Progression: Unveiling the Nrf2/HO-1-Mediated Pathway

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Introduction

Melanoma, a highly aggressive form of skin cancer, poses significant challenges in treatment due to its metastatic potential and resistance to therapy. Recent research has shed light on the intricate interplay between tumor cells and their microenvironment, particularly involving endothelial cells and immune cells. This article explores the phenomenon of endothelial mitochondria transfer to melanoma cells, its implications in promoting M2-type macrophage polarization, and its role in tumor growth *via* the Nrf2/HO-1-mediated pathway [1]. Melanoma represents a formidable challenge in oncology, characterized by its ability to metastasize early and resist conventional treatments. The tumor microenvironment plays a crucial role in modulating melanoma progression, where interactions between cancer cells, stromal cells, and immune cells significantly influence tumor behavior. Recent studies have uncovered a novel mechanism involving the transfer of mitochondria from endothelial cells to melanoma cells, leading to M2-type macrophage polarization and enhanced tumor growth through the Nrf2/HO-1-mediated pathway. The transfer of mitochondria between cells has emerged as a fundamental mechanism of intercellular communication with implications in various physiological and pathological processes. In the context of cancer, recent research has demonstrated the transfer of functional mitochondria from endothelial cells to melanoma cells. This phenomenon, facilitated by tunneling nanotubes or extracellular vesicles, allows melanoma cells to acquire metabolic advantages and promotes tumor progression [2].

Description

Macrophages play a dual role in the tumor microenvironment, with distinct phenotypes exerting either pro-tumorigenic or anti-tumorigenic effects. M2-type macrophages, characterized by their immunosuppressive and tissue-repairing functions, are frequently associated with tumor progression and metastasis. The transfer of endothelial mitochondria to melanoma cells has been shown to induce M2-type macrophage polarization, creating a favorable immunosuppressive environment that supports tumor growth and invasion. The Nrf2 (nuclear factor erythroid 2-related factor 2)/HO-1 (heme oxygenase-1) pathway is a key regulator of cellular responses to oxidative stress and inflammation [3]. Activation of Nrf2 leads to the upregulation of HO-1, which exerts cytoprotective effects by mitigating oxidative damage and promoting cellular homeostasis [4]. In the context of cancer, dysregulated Nrf2/HO-1 signaling has been implicated in tumor progression and therapy resistance. Studies have demonstrated that the transfer of endothelial mitochondria to melanoma cells activates the Nrf2/HO-1 pathway, providing a survival advantage to cancer cells and facilitating tumor growth in the hostile microenvironment. Understanding the molecular mechanisms underlying endothelial mitochondria transfer and its downstream effects on macrophage polarization and tumor growth offers promising avenues for therapeutic intervention in melanoma. Targeting key regulators such as Nrf2 and HO-1 may disrupt the pro-tumorigenic signaling cascade initiated by endothelial mitochondria transfer, potentially sensitizing melanoma cells to existing therapies and improving patient outcomes [5].

Conclusion

The intricate crosstalk between tumor cells, endothelial cells, and immune cells shapes the dynamic landscape of the melanoma microenvironment. Endothelial mitochondria transfer to melanoma cells represents a novel mechanism that promotes M2-type macrophage polarization and tumor growth through the activation of the Nrf2/HO-1-mediated pathway. Further elucidation of this pathway may uncover new therapeutic targets and strategies to combat melanoma progression and improve patient survival.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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